











# THE ~~BOY~~ BETWEEN











## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This is the personal story of a Berlin boy, a "cockney" pastrycook's son who, because he was born in 1927, was brought up first in the Hitler, and then in the Communist, Youth Movements. At the age of 16 he joined the *Waffen S.S.*, was severely wounded and still carries a bullet in his head. When he is under emotional stress, which is frequently, he suffers from blackouts.

He was captured by the Americans, and on his release from a prisoner-of-war camp joined the floating population of teen-age spivs and black marketeers who, among the ruins of Berlin, were still able to earn ten times as much in a day as their fathers got for an honest week's work. Here he made the acquaintance of young Communist agents infiltrated into the West, and at the age of 18, after a beating up, he finally renounced this life to join the Free German Youth Movement. There he advanced rapidly, owing to his acting ability; he was used to write and produce plays about honest Eastern boys who were led astray by Fascist agents, which toured the Eastern Zone. All this time, he was being subjected to a second flood of indoctrination, and though he was aware of a great deal of sincere idealism on the part of the youngsters amongst whom he worked, he also discovered that they were riddled with stool-pigeons, and twice in five years he was arrested, demoted and once again promoted. A gradual disillusion set in, and in 1952

he began to make cautious contact with boys who had gone over to the West. Finally, he himself followed their example.

Schaeffer is now out of work in West Berlin. The terrible moral of his story is that he belongs to a lost generation which has received no education apart from the various forms of indoctrination to which it has been subjected, and in which it has largely ceased to believe. He is not a shiftless young man ; indeed he is gifted and ambitious. But he is one of the hundreds and thousands of young Germans left rudderless by the events of history, who inevitably form the raw material of the future.



## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

**W**HEN I first heard of Karlheinz Schaeffer, his name was making news: front-page news.

He had taken a fairly conspicuous part in the Berlin riots of June, 1953. But then a good many other Berliners had taken part in that ill-fated putsch, which flared up one day among the workmen in the Stalin Allee, spread like wildfire over Eastern Germany, and was stamped out after a day or two when Russian tanks moved into action, and when at last a supply of food and consumer goods was dumped into the country.

Most of those who flung themselves into that pathetically hopeless revolt were driven by the courage of despair. But it took a different kind of courage for Karlheinz Schaeffer to cross the demarcation line and join the rioters east of the Potsdamerplatz. For there had been a price on his head ever since he had escaped to West Berlin on the eve of his second arrest.

He had been rather high up in the "Free German Youth" movement, and the Communist authorities of Eastern Germany were bound to take a menacing view of one of their own youth leaders deserting to the West.

They were even more incensed about his subsequent activities in West Berlin, his refusal to keep his mouth shut and his share in the riots of June, 1953. They seem to have been quite obsessed by the idea of getting that young man back. I suppose they still are. In 1954, at any rate, there were as many as three carefully organised attempts to kidnap him. That put young Schaeffer back into the headlines; and, no doubt, he will crash them again when the last of his would-be-kidnappers come up for trial in a West Berlin Court of Law.

But it was neither the kidnapping nor the other cloak-and-dagger aspects of the Schaeffer story—numerous and thrilling though they were—that roused my interest, when

*I read something of it in a Hamburg magazine. I felt that there was a good deal more in this than the trials and tribulations of one young fellow who happened to be in one of the nerve-centres of the East-West conflict, and who could hardly help being one of the pawns in that murderous game.*

*I felt that young Schaeffer must inevitably know a great deal about a certain aspect of that conflict, to which I had devoted considerable interest and study for many years. I suspected that he knew rather more about it than he was aware of, certainly more than he could consciously express. After all, he had been for five or six years first subject and later exponent of the ideological treatment to which individual youngsters, youth-groups and entire generations of young people are systematically submitted, wherever Communists hold sway and wherever a Communist Government is in charge of education.*

*I knew something about that system of indoctrination and about its methods. I was particularly interested in these applied in East Germany, and I was anxious to learn about the Freie Deutsche Jugend, or FDJ, as the "Free German Youth" movement is commonly known. I felt that young Schaeffer might be able to tell me a good deal more about it than I had already learnt from official sources, abundantly available and inevitably stressing its good points and undeniable achievements.*

*Not surprisingly, I was kept supplied with information about the more commendable aspects of the FDJ; for after all, the cradle of the movement had been in London; I had been present at its birth, and had watched some quite elaborate political midwifery in action. I had known some of the leaders of the movement when they were boys and girls of the second generation of German political refugees, and when they themselves were being patiently and thoroughly indoctrinated by the German Communist leaders in London exile.*

*At that time, of course, still lurking in Hampstead or Golders Green and still far from their future seats of power in East German affairs, none of them would admit their party affiliation except those who, being former*

Communist Party members of the Reichstag, could not very well deny it. The others—some of them rather more prominent in the hierarchy—were using “bourgeois camouflage”. I never knew whom they were trying to deceive (certainly not the British authorities, who were perfectly well and quite tolerantly aware of every refugee enjoying the right of political asylum). However, it was all part of their “constitutorial tactics”, and these again—not without a certain emotional appeal to youthful minds—were part of the educational system.

In those days, before and during the war, I had many heart-to-heart ~~catarrel~~ <sup>catarrel</sup> with the German Communist leaders exiled in London, and quite a few of our more or less friendly rows were about educational problems: about the genesis, as it were, of the very movement which was to become famous (or infamous) as Freie Deutsche Jugend; and which, incidentally, was to provide the background for the triumphs and disasters of Karlheinz Schaeffer.

Hence, when I first glanced at the young man's story in a Hamburg magazine and saw some of his references to his erstwhile leaders, and his vivid descriptions of their personalities, I knew that he wasn't talking through his hat; after all, I had known those leaders of East German youth when they were still boys in Hampstead and Golders Green.

Even so, I felt that young Schaeffer must have a good deal more to say; he might be the very man, I thought, to provide some “inside information” about matters and persons so very familiar to me through all the more official sources.

I went to Berlin to see him; and after a while, I went again and saw some more of him. He told me a good deal more about his life than had reached the newspapers, and I propose to let him tell in his own words whatever seems to be relevant in his story.

I think it is an important story, but I had better explain that what is important about it is not so much due to its central figure. True enough, young Schaeffer is a likeable fellow, a bright cockney type, such as can be found in most capital cities. He is a typical Berliner: quick in the up-

take, impulsive and yet shrewd, with a sense of fun and not without a sense of humour, either. Nor is he ungifted. He may well have the makings of an actor, but that has yet to be proved. He hopes to have the makings of a writer, though I'm not sure of that. But he has brains, even more ambition, and certainly a great deal of courage and of what is commonly called guts.

As it happens, he has packed a good deal of adventure into the ten years of his adolescence and early manhood. But that alone would not make his story stand out; no, even the fact that its background provides a significant picture of the Party hierarchy in Eastern Germany and throws some revealing light on its achievements and failures, on how its minds work and how it tries to set about the business of moulding the youth of the country in its own image.

All this is very interesting, to be sure, and certainly more penetrating and revealing than much other information available on Eastern Germany; but what makes the Schaeffer story important is a simple fact of considerable significance; the fact that Karlheinz Schaeffer is one of a whole generation of Germans which, for good or evil, is still to make its weight felt and to show its hand in shaping the things to come in Germany and in Europe.

It is a very hapless generation of Germans: those just old enough to have been somewhere between sixteen and nineteen in 1945, at the time of the surrender—an event which the Germans, significantly enough, call the Zusammenbruch, the debacle—boys and girls just old enough to have been "Hitler Youth" leaders when things went from bad to worse; and just young enough to have spent their entire childhoods under the Hitler regime.

It is a time commonly called the impressionable age, and we had better remember that there was a great deal to impress that particular generation one way and another. Those boys and girls were between nine and ten at the peak of their Führer's triumph, when the British Prime Minister and the French Premier went as supplicants to Munich. Those boys and girls were between ten and thirteen when their Führer unleashed his war to conquer

the world; and within the next few years the bells were pealing again and again to celebrate yet another glorious victory, whose proud tidings were blaring forth in yet another Sondermeldung—a special announcement put on the air by Joseph Goebbels, solemnly introduced by a roll of drums and a blizzard of fanfares, and no less solemnly concluded by a fervent rendering of the Deutschlandlied.

No one can understand how violently the subsequent events affected that generation and unbalanced it by a succession of contrasting crises—no one can begin to understand it without bearing in mind that the basic education which that generation received in the Hitler Youth movement was a pretty potent dose, and that its effect—certainly its subconscious effect—was rather more lasting than most of us were inclined to believe in the first year or two after the war.

The potency of that devilishly cunning and deliberately puerile system is hardly surprising. Take a boy of any colour, race or creed, give him a dagger inscribed "Blood and Honour"; tell him that he and his pals and his nation are the salt of the earth, and that all the others are second rate; tell him that if he gets bad marks in scripture and arithmetic, it doesn't much matter, so long as he is brave and tough, and good at games and sport, so long as he is worthy of his glorious dagger, loyal to his Führer, and smart in attending parades and torchlight processions; tell that to any boy and see how he adores you!

That is precisely what the Nazis did. And even though they overdid it a bit and dished out rather too strong meat for the liking of the more sensitive and intelligent youngsters, on the whole they did pretty well and most effectively; particularly in the first two or three years of the war, when it seemed that the Führer couldn't do wrong, and that the Wehrmacht, the Luftwaffe and the U-Boats were well-nigh invincible, even with practically the whole of the rest of the world lined up against them.

Here it may well be argued that a do-or-die ideology such as this depends entirely on success. Certainly the bulk of the German people failed to be impressed by Goebbels' last-ditch effort to make the Twilight of the





My mind went back to contemporaries of young Schaeffer from whom I had learned a good deal about their problems, which, alas, are very much **our** own problems. I thought of Dieter Meichsner who is only a year or two younger than Schaeffer and whom I had first met when he was still in his 'teens and writing his first book for my old friend Ernst Rowohlt, the publisher. Dieter had been one of those Hitler Youth leaders who could not bear to see his fatherland going to perdition. He had turned Werewolf and volunteered for a suicide squad. He was dropped by ~~parachute~~ behind the Russian lines and had some hair-raising adventures and a miraculous escape in swimming the Oder and rejoining his regiment. He had lived through the siege of Berlin and then gone back to school. After all, he was only sixteen and he was a schoolboy. I dare say, his questionnaire filed with the Allied authorities must have looked pretty black; but that boy looked after his "re-education" in his own way, and it was by no means an easy way, nowhere near as easy as that of most of his elders. Still, when I try to take an optimistic view of the future of Germany and Europe, I put my trust in ex-Werewolves such as him.

My mind went back to other contemporaries of young Schaeffer I had met. I thought of that evening in Berlin when Dieter Meichsner had asked a group of boys and girls to meet me at his digs. We talked through half the night. They were, all of them, fellow students at Berlin University. And since there are two universities in Berlin I should add that they went to the Western one and were, indeed, "Westerners", even though a few of them had inevitably had their flirtations with Communism.

"Don't you ever," I asked, "go a couple of miles East to argue with your contemporaries on the other side?"

They told me that they used to do that often, but that there wasn't much point in it once one had come to recognize the obvious fundamental points of difference.

"Even so," said a thoughtful girl, barely out of her 'teens, "it will never do to underrate their educational methods and the influence they obtain on young people."

That girl then made one of the most intelligent remarks



*I had ever heard on the subject, and since it happens to be a remark very relevant to the Schaeffer story, I may as well repeat it.*

*"In the Hitler Youth," she said, "we were taught to obey and to command, and we loved it as long as the going was good; we had certain ideals and were proud of them as long as we could honestly believe in them."*

*"We loved the trimmings, too," said one of the boys, "parades, torchlight processions and so on."*

*"Yes, we did," continued the girl, "but on the whole we merely had to do what we were told, and the more intelligent ones among us often had their doubts."*

*"Would you say," I asked, "that the whole thing went only skin-deep?"*

*"Maybe with some of us," said the girl, "though with some it went a lot deeper. Even so, most of us, I think, got it out of our system fairly easy."*

*"Would be a darned sight easier," muttered one of the boys, "if times weren't so lousy."*

*"You mean," I asked, "if you had anything else to believe in?"*

*The boy nodded his head glumly and then the girl, who had first spoken, continued with a vague gesture towards what may have been the East.*

*"Over there," she said, "they are much shrewder than were our more peremptory Hitler Youth leaders. Over there they let the youngsters argue their heads off until they honestly believe they have acquired their ideology all on their own."*

*The girl's exact words were: die bilden sich ja ein, sie haben ihre Weltanschauung selber erarbeitet; and from what I knew of Communist methods, this seemed to me so apt a remark that I have never forgotten it in all these years.*

*I had to think of it again when I read the first account of the Schaeffer story; it was indeed a remark most vividly born out by what young Schaeffer had experienced. It made me all the more eager to learn some more about it. I had a good many questions to ask him about the*

past and I wanted to know about his *present* background, too, and the way he lived.

So I went to Berlin to see him. I met his wife, Lilian (who is frequently mentioned in the story) and their children. As I had expected, I found them poorly off. There are about 300,000 unemployed in West Berlin, and as often as not young Schaeffer is one of them. Even so, they still live in the Frankenstrasse in Schöneberg, the Berlin suburb so often mentioned in the story. (It may well be considered the equivalent of, say, Balham or Clapham.)

I asked Schaeffer about the Hitler Youth and he said at once that it was the happiest time of his life. True enough, he had come to loathe much that he had admired in those days, but he wouldn't let it *spoil* the pleasant memory.

What was so pleasant about it? Mainly that there was something doing all the time, and particularly the good comradeship and the feeling that one could trust someone and be trusted in return, and that one had something to believe in.

What about the Army? Well, of course, he had joined up like everybody else. He didn't particularly enjoy it, but there was a war on and it was one's duty. He had been a soldier at seventeen, and had fought on a good many fronts, mainly in the East and South; he had been badly wounded several times, and finally just before his unit surrendered to the Americans somewhere in Austria. They had more or less patched him up at the base-hospital in Linz before he had been taken to an American P.O.W. Camp.

That's where we might as well let him start his story in his own words. In translating them, I have done my best not to alter the rough and ready style of the original narrative, and have merely elaborated and elucidated a few points here and there, wherever it seemed useful for making the meaning clearer to British readers.

# I

IT WAS October 30th, 1945, in Bad Ischl, Austria, and a fine day, almost summerlike. The grey-green jeep that pulled up in front of the American army hospital had a white star on its bonnet. As I limped towards it, the huge Negro driver took my bundle and threw it into the back seat.

"Come on, kid," he said and shifted me in next to my bundle.

"Does it hurt?" he asked, pointing to my leg. It hurt like hell and I told him so.

He took me to the P.O.W. Camp at Wegscheid near Linz. So this was an American camp. Row after row of huts stretching as far as the eye could see. There would have seemed to be no end to them but for a silvery tape on the horizon, glittering in the midday sun. That was the River Danube separating the American from the Russian Zone. The Americans had dumped into the camp whoever they had got hold of ; men of the Wehrmacht and the Luftwaffe, units and stragglers of the S.S., quite a few Nazi big-shots and a' sorts of ordinary civilians.

I didn't find it easy to fall into the dreary routine of camp life. Maybe I was too young. I hadn't the "couldn't-care-less" attitude of the hardened old foot-sloggers. I was fed to the teeth with the constant nattering about food and girls and politics.

There was one nice old N.C.O. who helped me stand it all : SS-Unterscharführer Kurt Ruschewski. A Russian sniper had shot him through his right hand ; his fingers were as stiff as logs. He would never again see his thirty acres of land in East Prussia. He hadn't heard from his wife for more than a year. That right hand of his would never again push a plough.

How much that man hated the Russians is more than I can express. I never knew a man could hate so much. Sometimes he would sit on the floor for hours on end, staring at his dead hand. But whenever he noticed how much camp life got me down, he would snap out of his own depression, and cheer me up with funny stories. He was nearly forty, old enough to be my father. He knew that I carried a shell splinter in my head, too near the optic nerve to be taken out. He knew, too, that from time to time I was seized by a splitting headache. It used to start with my arms and legs twitching. Then came a fiendish pain in the head, and then it seemed like a grey wall creeping up, creeping nearer and nearer and then crashing down upon me. If there wasn't anybody near to hold me, I would throw a fit and fall down headlong. I wouldn't be aware of it, though, until I had come to.

It happened twice during my time in the camp, and on both occasions I saw Kurt Ruschewski stand by, as the grey wall came creeping up; and it was he who went to the hospital dispensary and swiped pills that would ease my pain.

On Christmas Eve, we all stood freezing on the big square in front of the huts. It was icy cold, but there was no wind and hardly a flicker to disturb the candlelight on the huge Christmas tree. Six thousand prisoners sang *Stille Nacht* and *Oh, du fröhliche*. They didn't sing in good tune, but many of us had a lump in the throat. The American camp-commandant, Captain Hundhausen, and his staff stood in the corner of the big square. They raised their hands to the rim of their helmets, saluting smartly.

Three weeks later I was released. Kurt Ruschewski stood behind the fence and held out his dead hand. I never saw him again. In Stuttgart a cousin of mine got me some civilian clothes. On January 24th, 1946, somewhere near Helmstedt, I waited till after dark and then crept across the Zonal border. It took me more than forty hours to walk the sixty odd miles to

Schöneberg, the Berlin suburb which was my home town. On January 26th I knocked at my parents' door. It was the day before my nineteenth birthday.

My mother opened the door. She was so speechless with surprise that she just held my hand and pulled me into the flat, or rather that part of it which was still standing. Then she warmed the *ersatz* coffee, toasted three slices of bread and put them on the table with a little granulated sugar.

"I have eaten," she said. Later, I learned that this was her ration for the day. From somewhere or other she had conjured up a bottle of wine and then she said I must tell her everything. But what could I tell? I told her of Kurt Ruschewski, of his thirty acres in East Prussia and his stiff hand.

An hour or two after dusk, my father came home, and it was quite a shock to see him.

So this was my father, the confectioner and pastry-cook, Bruno Schaeffer. I remembered his hands, soft from forever kneading dough and handling flour, eggs, milk and butter. Now they were scarred and grimy with tar. He had been given some temporary work as a slater in the building trade. He looked very tired and hungry as we faced one another. "I was afraid you wouldn't come back," he said quietly.

In May, 1945, with the Red Army closing in on Berlin, the population hiding in cellars and air-raid shelters, and shells dropping all over town, the pastry-cook Bruno Schaeffer, veteran of the first World War, was called to the colours. It was the last straw. All those years he had been a group-leader in the National Socialist Party; on the Führer's birthday or other holidays he would put on his uniform. He was a much respected man and many a neighbour, when in trouble, would come to seek his help or advice.

Now the pastrycook and block-warden, Bruno Schaeffer, and some of the other old men and young lads had been given obsolete rifles to defend the Wilhelmplatz, the ruins of Hitler's Reich-Chancellery and Goebbel's Propaganda Ministry. They couldn't

put up much of a defence against the tommy-guns of the Russian troops. The battle was soon over.

In an endless silent stream the prisoners plodded through the smouldering ruins of Berlin towards the limestone pits in Rüdersdorf. Somewhere on the way the pastrycook Schaeffer managed to slip a piece of paper to a kindly soul. It was addressed to his wife and it said: "Am alive. Don't know what we are in for. But don't you worry." That message was promptly delivered.

In Rüdersdorf camp, Bruno Schaeffer was appointed baker and cook. When he served the Russian camp-commandant with one of his specialities, a cream cherry tart, the old major kissed him on both cheeks and decided to take him home to Russia.

Pastrycook Schaeffer threw up his hands in anguish: "The wife . . . !" he stammered.

The major rapped out an order, and twenty-five girls and women marched in: nurses, switchboard operators, typists.

"Pick yourself one," said the major.

Schaeffer explained that he had a wife already and didn't want another. So the kindly Russian major sent him off, not to far-off Russia but to nearby Schöneberg. The pastrycook had been a P.O.W. for a mere eleven days.

Back home in Schöneberg's Frankenstrasse, the former Party members and Nazi bigshots had donned red armbands with a uniform inscription. "I was no Nazi" it said in bold letters. Among them were some who, only a few months earlier, used to beg block-warden Schaeffer to have certain individuals sent to a concentration camp, because they weren't quite as enthusiastic henchmen of the Führer as Goebbels would have wanted them. Only a few months earlier block-warden Schaeffer had been in the habit of throwing such informers out of his flat.

Now the same people went to the police, denouncing Nazi Schaeffer. Two German policemen came to arrest him. At the local police station there was a new

chief, a Communist who had spent many years in concentration camps. One hour later Schaeffer was back at home.

Even so, he had the *Trockenstempel* on his identity card. This meant he had been a Nazi, and that he could not continue in his own business, even if there were any dough with which to make pastry. But there was no dough, anyway, and old Schaeffer was put on a building job as an apprentice slater. In Berlin, those days, there were a good many roofs to be slated and tiled.

In the flat back home in the Frankenstrasse **only** two of the four rooms stood up somehow. The other two were gaping holes. The wife of ex-block-warden Schaeffer heaved bucket after bucket of dust and rubble down to the street, where it had to be neatly piled. Anyone to help her? What about the good ladies of the former Nazi bigshots? They didn't seem to know her any longer; not since their husbands began to wear those lovely red armbands, professing that they were never, never, Nazis.

But then a few women did come to lend a hand. They were the wives of the Communists living in the neighbourhood. One of them was Frau Bahlke. It was she who, in the summer of 1944, had been quietly packed off to one of the holiday camps reserved for loyal Nazis. Block-warden Schaeffer had seen to that, even though her husband was under arrest for subversive anti-Party activities; and Frau Schaeffer had secretly provided the little Bahlkes with some shirts and socks and pants outgrown by Karlheinz.

So now I was back home and beginning gradually to realise that things wouldn't work out. So far, others had done all the thinking for me. I merely had to carry out what had been decided by them, which finally trickled down to me by way of official regulations, instructions and circulars. I merely had to obey orders. That's how it had been in the Army, and in the Hitler Youth, too, where I could in turn

pass on some of the orders to those under me. ' And now? Now I was entirely on my own. Very well, I would give myself my own orders. If only they would let me have a job of work! I wanted to get off the streets ; I wanted to learn something and ultimately do something worth while. But that was exactly what they wouldn't let me do. They merely gave me the famous questionnaire to fill in. And when I had truthfully answered all 133 questions, it was all over with that dream of a decent life. I hadn't a chance.

I began to be bogged down by self-pity ; and inevitably I was growing resentful. As I ambled up and down the Kurfürstendamm, enviously glancing at its haunts of pleasure, I felt that people ought to read in my face how thoroughly my generation had been misled and betrayed. I thought it was about time for some amends to be made. I told myself that in my nineteen years I hadn't had much of a life (and there, maybe, I was right). I believed that now was the time to enjoy myself. And the best way to do it, I thought, was to take to the bottle.

When my father came home from work, as often as not he would fish from his pocket some carefully wrapped cigarettes ; tips from American families who were living in confiscated German villas, and who would commission my father to patch up their damaged roofs in his spare time. They would pay him with a handful of cigarettes, and at five marks apiece that was more than he earned on his proper job in a couple of days honest toil.

I would sell such cigarettes on the black market set up in front of the ruins of the Reichstag. It was quite a market !

From valuable pictures and furniture, through stolen Leicas and fur coats down to illicit love (the cheapest of all commodities), there was practically nothing that couldn't be bought or sold on that market, with American cigarettes as the basic currency. I would muscle in with some "Amis"—which was what we called American soldiers—and help them to get a



Leica or a Contax for a "stick" or two of "Camels" or "Lucky Strikes": a lucky strike indeed, since it got them a valuable camera (even though a stolen or a "liberated" one) for the equivalent of a dollar or two, with perhaps a fifty mark note left over as a tip for myself, which was usually enough to buy a bottle of cheap vodka from a Russian soldier in search of cash for a girl. Enough too, to get me and my friend gloriously drunk. When we were blind to the world we would lustily sing the old songs of the Hitler Youth, relieve ourselves out of the window and feel grand.

My pal Ted—one of the boys in my Hitler Youth squad—used to see a lot of a Russian soldier called Pavel, a nice, easy-going bloke, who was crazy about Ted's young sister, Vilma. If Ted's father had known that his daughter used to meet a Russian soldier in a shed behind the ruins of the Schöneberg Station, he would probably have murdered her.

I went into business with Ted and Pavel, and we used to work quite a pretty line. Pavel would provide a pair of high Russian army boots, and I would squeeze them under my arm and saunter across the black market, with Ted next to me and Pavel close at hand. I would sell the boots for, say, 1,500 occupation marks. We would take the money and, as soon as we were out of sight, Pavel would accost the bloke who had bought the boots and simply take them away from him. After all, he was an Allied soldier and there was nothing the other fellow could do about it. Pavel would return the boots to us to sell again, and with luck yet another time. For each transaction Pavel would get a few hundred marks, so that all three of us were well taken care of.

From time to time we would work the *razzia* racket. "*Razzia*" was the word used for a raid by the Allied Military Police. It was a word to strike terror in the heart of the stoutest marketeer. So all of a sudden, in the midst of the crowded market, Ted would scream: "*Razzia!*" and dash away. The effect was instantaneous. Everybody would throw away whatever they

had to sell and dash off in a panic. All we had to do was to bend down, pick things up and fill our pockets with cigarettes, butter, sausages, coffee and tea. It was a good business, and oddly enough, we never got caught by the other operators, tough fellows though they were.

Sometimes we would take train to Halle, usually hanging on to the running boards, as the compartments were too full for anybody else to squeeze in. At Halle, in the midst of the Russian Zone, there was a schnapps factory, and with a bit of wangling one could get it for 70 marks a bottle. In certain Berlin pubs we could sell it for as much as 350 marks a bottle. Good business, with more than enough left over for me to be able to throw my weight about.

Night after night I would go to a certain café in the Bayerischeplatz in the West End of Berlin, and play the toff. The harassed waiter would show little patience with the other customers when plonking down their cups of *ersatz* coffee. But, when serving me, he would bow deeply as I took out my fat wallet and peeled off a hundred mark note with an expression of utter boredom. Quite the man about town!

My mother said nothing. Without a word of reproach she would clean my suit when someone delivered me home in the morning, dead drunk. My father hardly spoke to me any longer. He went to his job every morning at six and came home in the afternoon, dead tired and hungry.

One day in the spring it gripped me again. I happened to be in a pub in the Potsdamerstrasse, where once a week I used to meet some Polish marketeers. The old headache came on again. I wanted to drown the pain. But as I reached for the glass I felt the dreaded twitching in my arms and legs. There had been two tarts, one a platinum blonde and the other a redhead, sitting on the other side of the table, but now there was nothing but the grey wall creeping on and on. I shut my eyes so as not to see it. But still it crept on; and then it crashed down on me. I found

myself in the "Gents" when I came to. My temple was bleeding profusely and my fat wallet had gone.

Next morning I hung up my good suit, took out my rags and reported for work at the nearby firm of Bauer Brothers, in Schöneberg. They manufactured a liquid which was guaranteed to remove stains and which, maybe so as to attract an American clientele, was called *Okay Fleckenwasser*. My job was to sweep the office, clean the bottles and run errands. For that I was paid 25 marks a week. It was considered a fair wage, even though in black market currency it was just about the equivalent of five cigarettes. But I didn't care. I had had my bellyfull of the black market, and had quite a hangover—and not just a physical one, either. I took evening classes in a commercial school where I learnt a little accountancy and typewriting.

It was now midsummer. I managed to scrounge a tent so that my friends and I could spend weekends at Schildhorn, or other places on the river or the Havel Lakes. There we sat and talked, and posed a good many questions which no one seemingly would answer for us. Was there anyone at all who wanted us? Or had they just written us off like bad pennies? That's what we wanted to know. We didn't talk much about politics and parties. We loathed party politics, for we thought it was due to them that we weren't given a proper chance to learn something and to do a real job of work. But we knew that, sooner or later, we would come up against party politics all the same.

It happened soon enough. On October 20th, the Berliners were to elect their new Parliament. The Communists and some of the Social Democrats had meanwhile joined forces by forming the SED, the "Socialist Unity Party". I knew that its leaders were the Communist, Wilhelm Pieck and the former Social Democrat, Otto Grotewohl. But I neither knew nor cared that only a small fraction of the SDP (the Social Democrats) had agreed to the union. Nor did I then know that the forthcoming Berlin elections

were causing worldwide attention, far beyond the scope of a strictly local event.

Neither I nor my friends understood the implications. We weren't at all sure what all the fuss was about. All we knew was that there was a great deal of electioneering being done by all of the four parties concerned, and that practically every wall still standing in our home town was plastered with election posters. There seemed to be even more slogans than ruins and rubble, and there was certainly enough of **that** to make every Berliner sick at heart. As for us **boys**—the boys who had sat round our tent by the river—we hated all those grandiloquent posters ; but most of all we hated the SED posters ; for SED, that much we knew, stood for Communism, and hadn't we been taught way back in the Hitler Youth that Communism was a plague one should beware of or, better still, stamp out?

Hence, when dusk came, we would sneak through the streets of Schöneberg and tear down the SED posters, or we would stick labels over them, such as "When will they send our boys home from the Russian prisons?" One evening, I was just about to scrape down a poster with my pen-knife when someone touched my shoulder. I turned round and instantly felt a couple of good slaps in the face, one on each cheek.

It was Wilm, the taxi-driver, who slapped me, a man who had never hoisted the swastika all the twelve years of the regime, a man who had never denied being a Communist.

"Well, my boy," he said, "that may teach you a lesson. And you haven't heard the last of it, either !"

He was right. Soon after came a note saying : "You are requested to report at the Secretariat of the Socialist Unity Party, Schöneberg district office, Badensche Strasse 52." It was signed by Erich Bahlke. This was the same Bahlke who had been in concentration camps for so many years ; the Bahlke whose wife had been sent to a Nazi holiday-camp by my

father, and whose children had been looked after by my mother.

I went. I would give them a piece of my mind, I thought. I'd tell them off all right! Even so, I climbed the three flights of stairs rather warily. The anteroom of the party office was empty. There, too, I crept along the walls stealthily, tapping them as inconspicuously as possible.

"What on earth are you doing?" asked a voice from the door. I swung round with a start and saw a young fellow I knew. He wore a ragged suit and a dirty shirt, and he grinned at me. He had given me such a shock that I blurted out the truth. "I wanted to be careful," I explained. "I have been told that Communist Party offices may well be camouflaged mantraps, with secret cellars, trap-doors and so on."

The ragged fellow roared with laughter; his name was Peter Stolle, and I had known him as a boy. He shook hands with me and told me that he was in charge of the local youth-group. He also told me that he was really studying at the Polytechnic, but he was so busy with Party duties he had to interrupt his studies.

Then he took me into the office, and as I sat facing Comrade Erich Bahlke, I felt that I might have to revise my ideas of Communists and their methods. Bahlke didn't say a word about the poster business. I thought that rather decent of him.

"It's not easy for you boys, these days," he said. "I know that. But, after all, we're here to help you. Why not come to a meeting one of these evenings, when we are discussing your problems, your troubles and all the things that are bothering you? You needn't think that we just want to slip a Party ticket into your pocket, because we don't. We don't accept members as easily as that. You can just come or go, and please yourself."

I did come to a meeting, and when I noticed that people could speak their minds freely, I went again. I happened to sit in the front row, and when asked to speak in the debate, I spoke up for what we had

learned to be our real ideals in the Hitler Youth movement. No one interrupted me, no one chucked me out, even though the audience included men who had been in concentration camps for years, men such as Walter Barthel, who soon after became Wilhelm Pieck's private secretary.

There were some non-Communists among the adults, too, such as an American Youth Officer, who had a good deal to say and was listened to respectfully. Here, I felt, I could really speak my mind, and ask the questions no one had ever answered for us.

"Why don't you give us a chance to work and learn something?" I shouted. "What is our crime? Do you think you can make us good little democrats merely by telling us that everything we ever did in the Hitler Youth was wrong, and hateful and wicked? Have you anything else to give us? Anything to make us proud and happy?"

I was sweating with excitement and my fists were clenched. I must have looked like a cross between an all-in wrestler and a barker at a fair.

The American Youth Officer was a Mr. Miller. He was supposed to be a parson, but he certainly didn't look like one. He was more like a boxer. He might have been a businessman too, with his beautifully creased pants and the fine silk handkerchief in his breast pocket. He was deeply tanned, and now he grinned at me, showing his healthy teeth. In perfect German, he said something which really made me think. One can train an animal easily enough, was the gist of what he said, but that's not the way to make a chap a good little democrat. Either he'll get there under his own steam or he won't get there at all. The Allied authorities and the German parties licensed by them can do no more than point out the road, but we'd have to walk it alone. And as for my desire to be aroused, I would just have to get used to the idea that the trappings and trimmings of a democracy are not as glamorous as they used to be in the Third Reich. It was up to everybody to give

himself his own orders and to bear his own responsibilities.

That struck a chord ; for it occurred to me that I had been toying with much the same idea when I got home from the P.o.W. camp.

And then there was Ingeborg. It so happened that we walked home together after one of those evening discussions. She lived in the Goltzstrasse in Schöneberg, and that was right on my way. Ingeborg was nineteen and had very long, blonde hair, reaching well below the collar of her overcoat. That overcoat had seen better days when it was still a *Wehrmacht* blanket. We talked all sorts of nonsense. Maybe the heated debate we had just left had been a bit over our heads.

"Here's where I live," said Ingeborg, stopping and fishing a key out of her bag. I felt I must never let go that girl. It seemed to me that I was already very fond of Ingeborg.

"Do you have to go up yet?" I asked, stepping near to her in the dark, open doorway.

"Of course ! What else?" She looked at me quizzically with her big grey eyes. I embraced her violently and tried to kiss her. Her perfume seemed to me intoxicating ; quite certainly it wasn't the sort of stuff that could be bought in Berlin in those days.

"Let go !" she said, thrusting me away. She unlocked the front door. I stood in the street and hung my head. Then she came back, no longer angry.

"Well," she said, "you know where I live now, don't you?"

As I tramped home through the streets of Schöneberg, I felt very elated. It was a desolate night and I could have torn off as many SED posters as I wanted. But I didn't want to any longer.

For the next week or two nothing happened. I hadn't the guts to go and see Ingeborg. Besides, I didn't know her surname. I couldn't very well ring at every door of that big tenement-house, and ask if a girl called Ingeborg happened to live there. I didn't

go to see Bahlke, either. But next week he sent for me. I should have preferred to be sent for by Ingeborg.

It was a different sort of Bahlke who now sat opposite me at his desk. It was only now I realised that he had a pointed nose and unpleasantly piercing eyes. On his emaciated body hung a suit he may well have patched himself after office hours. After all, he was a tailor by trade. He gave me a cool, testing glance.

"Karlheinz," he said, "it's about time for you to **show** that you mean to do something, and that you've overcome the past."

He wanted me to run errands for the Party, and to distribute leaflets. I didn't quite see why the hell I should. The SED and I weren't exactly married yet, were we? But all the same, I went and did it.

When I stood in Schöneberg's Akazienstrasse and shoved a leaflet into the hand of a woman passer-by, she glanced at it, threw it away and looked at me squarely.

"My Herbert was in your squad," she said. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" She spat at my feet three times and stalked away.

I scratched my head in embarrassment. This didn't seem to be the right moment for one's Hitler Youth past to be brought up. And then, I didn't like this job, anyway. I went back to Bahlke. "No more leaflets for me," I said, as I threw the rest of my supply on to his desk.

Bahlke wasn't a hasty man, and he gave the matter some thought. "Very well," he said after a while, "you'll have to pass your test some other way. Didn't they teach you to play the trumpet in the old days?"

"Pass the test" he had said. What the devil did he mean, I wondered? It sounded very much like a penal company or being given fatigues by the old drill sergeant. But maybe they had to test me somehow, so as to find out whether or not I belonged.

So I got my old trumpet out of the cupboard, and



went with Bahlke round the courtyards in our neighbourhood. Somewhat incongruously, I would blow a few of the old Hitler Youth calls, and that would get the people to their kitchen windows. Then Bahlke would give them a speech about German unity, and a just peace treaty, about the blessing of the Soviet Union, and how dear old Uncle Joe Stalin had the welfare of us Germans constantly at heart.

More often than not—Schöneberg being very much a “Western” district—we got dish-water over our heads, to say nothing of more solid missiles, such as rotten potatoes. In some houses we were booted out even before Bahlke could get going properly on his speech; and as we came to our own street, a woman who had known me as a small boy leaned out of the window and screamed: “Look at that blasted brat! Blowing for the Brownshirts one day, and now for the Reds!”

How I hated those damned fools behind their windows, oh, how I despised them! What the hell did they know about me and the likes of me? What the hell did they care? Couldn’t they get it into their petty-bourgeois fat heads that, on account of my Nazi past, I was not allowed to do a proper job of work? Nor to study either. Couldn’t they understand that a fellow must do *something*? They made me sick!

And I could not help remembering those evenings at the Party Office, with their free-for-all discussions, when Walter Barthel and Erich Bahlke would tell us about their spells in concentration camps. Wasn’t it only fair to admit that these men had suffered terribly for their convictions, and had stood up bravely for their ideals? They certainly had, and it made me hate the Nazis who had tortured them. Better still, I began to consider myself a victim of National Socialism—and there, maybe, I wasn’t far wrong.

Comrade Bahlke must have noticed the change in my state of mind. He invited me to go to a Party meeting, set for October 11th, in the *Kyffhäuser-Schule*. It was to be a protest meeting against American occupation policy. That was right up my alley, grist

to my mill. So far as the Yanks were concerned—"Amis" we called them—I had had a bellyfull of them. I'd seen enough to make me loathe their barracks and offices at Zehlendorf, where after dusk our girls hung around selling themselves for a pound of coffee or a pair of nylons. I'd seen enough of those Ami-tarts, with their brightly coloured shawls and blood-red lipstick, chewing their gum, puffing away at their Ami-cigarettes, and snapping their fingers at every decent German boy. I'd seen former BDM-leaders\* letting themselves be cuddled by Negro soldiers. I'd definitely seen enough of the Amis to make me sick and tired of them, and as for Mr. Miller, the boxer-parson, I betted he wasn't much different, either.

The man in charge of the meeting in the *Kyffhäuser-Schule* was the Communist Party district leader in the nearby suburb of Friedenau. This was Dr. Melzheimer, and we had met before. In a torchlight procession through the streets of Friedenau I had found myself marching next to him. His eyes shone with enthusiasm as he chanted the Internationale. His doctor's degree made him appear a parlour-Bolshie, but that seemed one more reason for his eagerness to be accepted by us boys as a guide and mentor of young proletarians.

In the assembly hall of the *Kyffhäuser-Schule* I was glad to see many familiar faces, but I was delighted to see Ingeborg. She sat between our milkman and Wilm, the taxi-driver (the one who had once boxed my ears). Dr. Melzheimer, of course, was sitting with Barthel, Bahlke and the other leading comrades. Some of them went to the platform to address the audience, but it preferred speeches from us youngsters. I was one of those sent up to speak.

I let go with a vengeance, and since I had no arguments to offer and few coherent thoughts in my head other than prejudices, I just bawled away, shooting

\*BDM used to stand for *Bund Deutscher Mädchen* (League of German Maidens) which was the female branch of the Hitler Youth movement. .

my mouth off against the Americans and all they stood for. I banged my fist on the table, and so vehement was my argument that I banged it again, and this time it collapsed.

The audience roared with laughter, and cheered me to the echo. Unwittingly I had achieved the *clou* of the evening, and no-one could deny that my first effort as a public orator was a smashing hit!

Ingeborg was waiting at the door. It was past ten and we vanished into the darkness before anyone could see us. She took my arm, and we marched off towards the Golzstrasse.

"Why didn't you come?" she asked.

"I didn't dare."

"You're silly."

"Yes, but . . . but . . ."

"But what?" she asked and stopped short. She was a little out of breath and looked at me, not at all angrily.

"But, I'm awfully fond of you," I said very quickly; and this time she didn't budge as I kissed her. This time she responded. As we reached her house, the clock nearby struck twelve.

"Must you really go in for all that party gibberish?" she asked.

Gibberish she called it. If only she knew how much all this meant to me! It was the first chance given me to learn the very things that boxer-parson had talked about, the things on which he was so dead right, even though he was a Yank: a fellow must give himself his own orders, and he must bear his own responsibility. That's what he had said, and if a party accepted such a principle, there must be something in democracy, after all. And if the same party called for peace on earth, and everybody's right to work, and for freedom of thought and opinions, and for a just peace and a united Germany, and for giving all power to the working classes, and for lifting from all young people and the small fry of ex-Party members the curse of guilt for the Hitler Reich—if a party called for all that, it was jolly well my party.

## EDITOR'S COMMENTARY (i)

**H**AVING reached this point in his story, I asked Schaeffer if at any time he had really understood the background of the newly formed SED; and if he had realised that the "Unity Party" was very far from representing a freely decided union between the Communists and all Social Democrats.

"Well," he said, "I did know that Grotewohl didn't represent all the Social Democrats. I knew, of course too, that the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, the SPD, was still there and being led by Schumacher. After all, they were our principal opponents in the Election."

I asked him whether he realised at the time why that particular election, though only a relatively minor local event, aroused world-wide attention and provided front-page news all over the world. No, he had not realised the significance of that first and very rare test of how public opinion would react in a community run by Communists, once the proper democratic procedure was guaranteed by international control; nor had he realised the particular significance of the fact that in some Eastern districts of Berlin—i.e. those exclusively run by the Communists—the victory by the SPD (Social Democrats) over the SED (Communist "Unity Party") was even more decisive than in the overall figures of just over 40 per cent for the SPD and just under 20 per cent for the SED.

"We didn't bother about the results of the election," he said. "We were told that they were faked by the Western Imperialists and their SPD lackeys."

I told him that I happened to be in Berlin myself at the time, along with scores of journalists from all over the world, and that we had convinced ourselves of the meticulously fair arrangements of international control at every polling booth.

*Schaeffer smiled and shrugged his shoulders.*

*"A fat lot we bothered," he said. "All we really cared about was the thrill of the election campaign."*

*It made me think of the earlier part of his story: how, at the initial stage of that very election campaign, he had still been one of the young hooligans tearing off or defacing SED posters, and how he had come to be won over by their clever demagogues—most of them, no doubt, utterly sincere in their own convictions—who knew how to fill the emotional and spiritual vacuum in the minds of these youngsters.*

*I told Schaeffer that I could fully understand how and why he was so deeply impressed by people who seemed to show such an appreciation of his problems, and who gave him a chance to do something and to express himself. But how exactly, I wanted to know, was he finally won over? Was there anybody or anything in particular that had impressed him sufficiently to make him join the Party there and then?*

*"Why, yes," said Schaeffer, "Jochen, of course! Jochen Weigert and the Judenfrage."*

*The Jewish problem? There wasn't any mention of that in the original draft of the Schaeffer story, certainly not in connection with Jochen Weigert. I asked about it.*

*"Jochen Weigert was a very nice chap, a smart fellow, you know; and so very, very . . . insistent."*

*He had been fishing for that last word; it was certainly a fitting description of Jochen Weigert, who was only a few years older than young Schaeffer. I happened to know Jochen well. I knew him when he was a boy in Hampstead and Golders Green, one of the second generation of Jewish refugees, groomed by the German Communist leaders in London exile. He was one of their most adept pupils, thoroughly sincere in his convictions, a devout follower of the Party line; and, not surprisingly, his career back home in Germany had been rapid, and he soon became one of the top leaders of the "Free German Youth" movement (FDJ), created by the Communist-sponsored "Unity Party" of Eastern Germany.*

*Knowing very well how fittingly young Schaeffer's*

last epithet for his former chief and mentor had been chosen, I soon learned that, in this particular case, Jochen Weigert's insistence was well tempered by shrewdness and tact. I was curious to know exactly how Schaeffer had come up against Weigert and the Jewish problem, and he told me.

The Judenfrage had been the sole topic on the agenda of the discussion group one evening, and Jochen Weigert, chairman and discussion leader, had been as insistent as could be expected on such a subject. He had given them all the gruesome data of the extermination camps, and the Auschwitz gas-chambers, and he had shown them picture after picture sufficiently nauseating to make the very words "Nazi" and "Gestapo" stink in their nostrils. It was perhaps a trifle too intense and too insistent an educational effort, and it certainly shocked some members of that young audience into hysterics, and quite a few of them, particularly the girls, began sobbing uncontrollably.

But the discussion leader wanted to drive his lesson home still further. "Have you nothing to say about the gas-chambers, Karlheinz?" He addressed young Schaeffer sternly.

Karlheinz was as deeply shocked and touched as anybody else, but he was now provoked into a typical cockney spirit of contrariness, and out of sheer stubborn spite blurted out: "Haven't gassed enough of them yet!"

The moment he had said it he would have given anything to have left the ghastly words unspoken. He hadn't meant to say it, and he fully expected to be beaten up mercilessly, and to be kicked out ignominiously. He felt that he deserved it, and he would have welcomed it, if only to break the unbearable tension and hushed silence that had fallen on the room. When, at long last, the boy dared to look up, he met Jochen Weigert's earnest glance. There was not a breath of anger in the older boy's voice as he broke the tense silence.

"So you think they haven't gassed enough, do you? I suppose you know that a good many of my family were among those gassed at Auschwitz, but we must leave personalities out of this. It is a very serious problem

*and we must try to deal with it unemotionally. You, Karlheinz, think they haven't gassed enough. Well, it's a point of view and we will have to argue it."*

*And argue they did, though almost all the arguing had to be done by the discussion leader. Nor did even he have to argue very much, for after a minute or so young Schaeffer broke down sobbing, and asking forgiveness for the awful thing he had said.*

*Jochen Weigert came over to him with a smile, and gave him a hearty slap on the shoulder.*

*"I know you didn't mean it," he said, "I know you are a decent boy at heart, and now not another word about it. The meeting is adjourned."*

*It was then and there—so Karlheinz Schaeffer told me—that he was won for the cause, won unconditionally. At that moment (and at a good many other moments later) he would have been prepared gladly to die for it. But let him continue the story in his own words.*

## II

IT WAS on October 20th, 1946, the day of the Berlin election, that Erich Bahlke handed me my Party ticket. I was now a fully fledged member of the SED and the FDJ, the Socialist Unity Party and the Free German Youth movement.

On December 24th, under the Christmas tree, I got engaged to Ingeborg. I couldn't give her a present ; my last money had gone on the engagement rings. And black marketeering was now definitely out. I wanted to learn something and get a proper job of work. What else did I want? Just Ingeborg.

On January 7th, 1947, when we were together in Ingeborg's room, there was a ring at the front door. She seemed somewhat startled and went out. I looked out of the window and saw a jeep pulled up at the curb, grey-green with a white star on the bonnet. It was the same type of jeep that had picked me up at the American hospital.

I heard my fiancée whisper through the half-open door to the landing, and I heard a man's voice reply in a strong American accent. I opened the door and saw a stout, broad-shouldered American pawing my fiancée. He was evidently drunk, with his cap awry, and his left hand clumsily fishing a large tin of Nescafé out of his trouser pocket. He had already shoved some nylons and a bottle of perfume into Ingeborg's hands.

She looked at me, flabbergasted. The American laughed raucously and shouted : "Hullo !" He seemed to be even more drunk than I thought.

I tapped him on the shoulder and said : "Ami, go home !" That made him shriek with laughter, whereupon I gave him a hook to the chin which dropped him to the floor, and pulled him down a flight of stairs.



He started hollering and the neighbours began to take notice. The door of the flat across the landing opened and an elderly woman peeped out.

"Changing of the guard at Fräulein Ingeborg's," she sneered. Upstairs a small boy cocked a snook and bleated: "*Ami-Hure! Ami-Hure! Ami-Hure!*"

The American soldier tried to get to his feet, but he seemed to be very drunk indeed. A small push was enough to topple him over again. Cursing and yelling he made his way downstairs, and presently could be heard starting up his jeep.

My exit from Ingeborg's flat was quite undramatic. I pulled the ring off my finger, and put it on the bedside table. She cried a little and tried to hug me. I had to use some force to remove the girl's soft naked arms from around my neck. Then I shut the door behind me and walked slowly down the three flights. From upstairs on the landing I could still hear the small boy screaming: "*Ami-Hure! Ami-Hure! Ami-Hure!*"

My engagement had lasted fifteen days.

Peter Stolle, the ragged fellow I had encountered on my first visit to the Party office, put a small bag on the table. It was full of diamonds and all sorts of semi-precious stones.

"You're to sell this stuff, Karlheinz," he said. "You've got the proper contacts."

The proceeds, Stolle said, would be used by the Party for sending young comrades to West Germany. I didn't bother to enquire where the Party had got the diamonds, and why the young comrades were to be sent to West Germany.

I went to see the Polish marketeers at the same pub in the Potsdamerstrasse where my wallet had been swiped last summer. The deal was satisfactorily concluded. I got some 12,000 marks for the stuff, and I gave Peter the money. A few days later, he handed me another small bag of jewellery, and again I took it to the pub. The Poles had a look at the stuff,

and said I was to meet them next morning at Hermsdorf, one of the outer Berlin suburbs on the way to Oranienburg. Of the three men who met me at the entrance to the new cemetery, two were unknown to me ; the third was the one with whom I had negotiated and made the appointment. As I pulled out the bag, one of the three men snatched it from me, while the other two overpowered me and threw me on the ground. They very nearly strangled me, and there was that grey wall again, creeping on and on.

With neither the jewellery nor the money, and nothing to show for it but a sprained shoulder and a black eye, I limped back to Peter Stolle.

"That can happen to anybody," he consoled me with a grin. "Just one of the risks of the trade. Don't give it another thought."

This seemed to settle the matter, but when a day or two later I told my friend Wolfgang Leonhardt about it, he gave me a long look and said : "Mark my word, Karlheinz, one day that chicken will come home to roost. You are too green yet to understand me, but believe it or not, you should have refused to join the Party."

A week or two later, I was sent for to the Communist Unity Party district head office in the Behrenstrasse. Heinz Kessler, the chief of its Youth Department in the Berlin City Administration, told me the Party wanted the Free German Youth to be honeycombed with loyal Party comrades.

In those days, the Free German Youth was still supposed to be a non-party movement. As for Kessler, he had gone over to the Russians in the last stages of the war and fought in the ranks of the Red Army. He addressed me with a friendly smile.

"You, my dear Karlheinz, have been picked by the Party to work in the Berlin branch of the Free German Youth, and to be groomed as a teacher for the new school at Paetz, near Königswusterhausen. We all

think you are the right man for the job. Our Russian friends and the Party approve of you."

I was rather startled. I had imagined the Free German Youth to be non-Party and independent. And I was now to be groomed as a teacher at a Party school? Our "Russian friends" approved of me? But were they really our friends? I tried to get out of the whole thing.

"Comrade Kessler," I said, "do please send someone else; someone older and more experienced than I am."

Kessler was tall and slender. He had an impressive face with an aquiline nose, and he was seven years older than me. He rose slowly behind his desk and stalked up to me. He gave me an ice-cold, calculating glance.

"Tell me, do you know Comrade Peter Stolle?"

"Why? Of course I know him."

"Didn't you lose some jewellery the other day? Some rather valuable property entrusted to you by the Party? You are said to have cooked up a pretty little fairy tale about the disappearance of the stuff. I should say, Comrade Schaeffer, that you would be well advised to do as you are told in future."

Next morning I reported for duty in the Kronenstrasse. The ex-motor mechanic, Heinz Kessler, has gone up in the world since those days. He is now a general in the "People's Police", which is part of the armed forces of Eastern Germany.

To-day I know that, when Kessler blackmailed me into accepting the assignment, I should have smelt a rat. But I didn't. All I did was to let myself be browbeaten. I suppose he used what they call shock-tactics, and maybe, if he had thundered at me instead that I had embezzled the Party funds, I would have been sufficiently cowed to promise amends for a crime I had not committed.

But I just didn't smell a rat, not for a long time I didn't. Not for four years.

There wasn't much left of the Kronenstrasse. A few houses and a few partly habitable ruins stood up

in an ocean of dust and rubble. Once this district of Berlin used to be a centre for newspapers offices and publishing houses. In one such building, Number 31, the Central Committee of the Free German Youth had opened up its new headquarters.

To be able to grasp the background of all this, it should be borne in mind that, up to the beginning of 1947, the Free German Youth was recognised only in the Eastern Zone, where it was sponsored and supported by the Soviet authorities and the Communist "Unity Party" (SED). There was as yet no FDJ in Berlin, where it had to be authorised by all four Occupation Powers. So far, the Americans, the British and the French had withheld permission.

What now happened was that a new application authorising a Berlin branch was submitted to the Allied authorities, the applicants being Heinz Kessler and one Eva Krause. Kessler, of course, was a well known member of the Communist Party, but Eva Krause was "non-party", and a good thing, too, since the Western authorities would never have accepted two Communist sponsors. A few weeks after the authority had been granted, Eva Krause got her Party ticket, but there wasn't much of a song and dance about it ; the Western authorities weren't even aware of the event. Anyway, by then the Berlin branch of the FDJ was comfortably settled in the Kronenstrasse.

After a few days' work at the office, I could not help noticing that whatever the FDJ did or failed to do was on the orders of the Central Committee of the Communist SED in the nearby Behrenstrasse.

Now, for the first time, the Party began to meddle in my private life. Kessler instructed me to produce an account of the Ingeborg affair. What business was that of the Party? But on second thoughts I realised that it must be a desirable thing for the Party to insist on its officials being above suspicion in their private lives. So I duly appeared before a panel consisting of four comrades, and explained how

and why I had broken off my engagement to Ingeborg.

Facing me across the table sat two officials of the Communist Party and two of the Free German Youth. The two Party men were well over forty, the two youth leaders barely out of their 'teens.

Did intimacy take place in my relations with Ingeborg? Was our engagement free of bourgeois influences? Did she try to enmesh me in her net of Anglo-American contacts? I stood there, answering yes or no, and giving a detailed account of my most intimately private affairs which, only a few weeks earlier, would have seemed to me sacrosanct. Finally, it went on record that "by exercising proletarian vigilance I had severed a connection which was not in keeping with the progressive conception of love and marriage."

Then they sent me to school at Paetz.

Next door to the new FDJ premises at Paetz there happened to be a Russian ammunition depot, guarded by two very young soldiers, Ivan and Alex. Herbert Fölster was the headmaster of the school and I was his assistant, and the courses, given to varying groups of youngsters, lasted a fortnight each. While Herbert and I did our level best to ground our pupils in the rudimentary slogans of anti-Fascism, anti-Americanism and anti-Militarism, there was usually a hell of a din going on next door, where Ivan and Alex, drunk as usual, were leaning against the door of their guard-room and amusing themselves exceedingly in their own way. They had been delighted to discover that the ventilation holes of the two lavatory doors in the courtyard were shaped like little hearts; there were two such holes in each door, and for hours on end Ivan and Alex would bang away with their revolvers at these neat little targets.

Herbert Fölster, my chief, was eight years older than me. In his family, Communism was practically a religion. He had done four years in Nazi concentration camps, and he was as hard as nails and pretty

short-tempered. He was annoyed by this continual din, and sent me across to have a word with the Russian soldiers.

I ran across the courtyard to the guardroom. It contained two iron bedsteads, a table and a cupboard. That was all the furniture. Over each bedstead there was a portrait of Stalin, and along the wall there were Red banner-slogans. Ivan took a dusty vase from the window-sill, threw out the shrivelled asters, and filled it to the brim with vodka. "You drink up," he babbled. "You good comrade of ours."

I gulped the vodka out of the flower vase. It quickly went to my head. Alex stumped up to me with a friendly grin and handed me his gun. He wanted to know what sort of a shot I was. Hadn't tried for two years. Might as well have a go. What about those porcelain knobs on the telegraph wires? The distance was some 70 or 80 feet. I had a shot at them. The first one was too high, the second too low, the third was a hit. Bull's eye. There was a funny little tinkle which meant that our direct telephone line to the FDJ camp was bust, and Alex roared with delight.

At the height of all this din a large limousine turned into the courtyard. Heinz Kessler got out of it and behind him my father. Kessler spoke Russian fluently; after all, he had been a soldier in the Red Army, and had spent a year at the Party school in Moscow. He gave Ivan and Alex friendly slaps on their shoulders. Then he took a mighty gulp from the vodka bottle, grabbed Ivan's gun and scored a bull's eye right in the middle of one of the little hearts on the lavatory door. The Russians cheered him like mad. Kessler laughed, and some of our boys, who had come upon the scene, joined in the laughter. I, too, screamed with laughter. My father looked at me quietly. I hadn't even welcomed him; there just hadn't been time as yet. I was a bit dizzy, too, and things seemed to be revolving behind a veil. As I staggered towards my father to shake his hand, he turned on his heel without a word and walked through the gate towards

the main road. It was twelve kilometres to the nearest railway station at Königswusterhausen.

I wanted to run after him, but I seemed to have lead in my boots. And what the hell could I say to my father, anyway? It was only after I had sobered up that I began to realise what a struggle it must have meant for him to have set foot in his son's camp.

Meanwhile I tottered up to my room to vomit. Ten minutes later, still feeling sick, I stood before the assembled boys and girls to tell them what I knew about the Socialist answer to Monopoly-Capitalism.

I had learned a bit about that, too. I was fairly well versed in the rudiments of Communist ideology, and heartily approved of the Party line stressing the demand that German Youth must be excluded from the principle of collective guilt. I knew that the Party demanded total power for the working classes as well as a just peace and the unity of Germany. All this I sincerely accepted, and since countless talks and discussions had taught me a great deal about the crimes committed under Hitler's Reich, I could genuinely appreciate the Party's generosity in excluding us youngsters from that awful burden of guilt and responsibility, and all the more appreciate our own duty and responsibilities in helping to build up a new democratic order.

What little I knew about the science of Marxism came out of Party primers and pamphlets. I had read a good many of them, and had studied bits of Marx, Engels, Lenin and, particularly, Stalin. I had been taught the rudiments of the materialist concept of history and the dialectic method. I had grown to be so loyal to the Party line that I would no longer concede to my pupils the right I used to claim for myself only a few months earlier: the right to speak one's own mind, to raise doubts and express critical opinions.

These boys and girls at Paetz were as full of questions as I used to be myself, and they were just as sincere in their desire to do their share in building up a new

order. But I myself had now come to preach what only a few months earlier would have disgusted me as an arbitrary imposition of ideas. I had come to be intolerant ; and worse, I was unaware of it.

At the end of the course I had to sit down with Herbert Fölster on some long private sessions, and for a couple of nights we burned midnight oil. We had to write a report on every member of the class. Was he (or she) reliable? Was he politically conscious? Were his questions in class prompted by honest doubts, or inspired by Fascist propaganda?

These reports had to be made in triplicate. One copy was filed at the school, another went to the personnel file, kept on every member of the FDJ at the head office in Kronenstrasse, and the third went to Captain Szvershinsky, at the Soviet Central Kommandantura, 3, Karlstrasse.

"What the hell have the Russians got to do with it?" I asked Fölster, rather naïvely.

"If only you weren't such a bloody fool," he answered, yawning with boredom.

"Tovarichi ! Your cultural work nix good for broad masses !"

The man who voiced this severe criticism in halting German, but none the less tellingly, wore the uniform of a Captain in the Red Army. He was about forty and his name was Szvershinsky. His intelligent face was never absent when the Free German Youth Group Secretariat held its meetings. He could hardly follow more than one word in five of the heated discussions, yet he was thoroughly aware of all that was going on. They called him "the radar of the Soviet Kommandantura."

There were ten of us Party officials assembled together on that 3rd April, 1947. We were in a conference room at Party headquarters in Behrenstrasse, and from time to time we lowered our eyes to the richly carpeted floor. Carpeted indeed ! Such severe criticism from so exalted a Russian was not to





Ulbricht (centre), the East German Prime Minister, presides at a cultural conference beneath Stalin's portrait. On his left, the famous novelist Arnold Zweig



JUGEND  
HOCHSCHULE  
AM BOGENSEE



Poster for the Youth Training School at Bogensee.

# Sozialistische Einheitsp. Deutschlands

ITGLIEDSKARTE NR. 111-143531

Vor- und Zuname **Karlheinz Schaffer**  
geb. am **27.1.27.** **Stuttgart**  
Beruf **Schüler**  
pol. h. organs. **Nov. 1946**  
Jugendorg. **Nov. 1946**  
Mitglied seit **Nov. 1946**  
Wohnung, Ort **Bogen-7. 30,  
Frankenstr. 4**

Diese Karte wurde am **25.11.46.**



*Rudolf*  
und Un... ..

Schaffer's cancelled membership card of the Socialist Unity Party.

at work again, and said that in his opinion the very existence of such a movement was a sure indication of something being wrong in the State, and of conditions of suppression and persecution being rife.

Herbert Fölster didn't say a word, but got up abruptly and stalked off in a huff.

From time to time Captain Svontkin came out to see us. He was a wiry, elderly man, and spoke perfect German. He was the youth officer in the Soviet Central Kommandantura of Berlin. Here was a chap one could really talk to, everybody felt; a man who never resented a question and always tried to answer it. There was Helmut Blömert, a slim boy with an ugly scar on his left arm, badly burnt during the siege of Berlin. Helmut had a good question for Captain Svontkin, and got a good answer.

"My father," said the boy, "used to tell us that, apart from their crimes, the Nazis did some good, too—motor roads, for instance, and the 'Strength-through-Joy' outings for the workers."

Svontkin listened attentively, and then explained to Helmut and the rest of us that, however useful the *Autobahnen* are for carrying our peaceful traffic now and in the future, we should never forget that Hitler built them for strategic reasons and as one of the means to his aggressive war; as for the "Strength-through-Joy" movement, that was merely a trick to make the German workers forget that they were being exploited for the arms drive.

Later, I saw the Russian officer walking up and down the shore of the lake with his arm on the Berlin slum boy's shoulder, still talking to him. That evening, Helmut Blömert was full of enthusiasm for his new Russian friend.

A few days later, when the whole camp was assembled for the one discussion of the week, Gerhard Klarmann rose to speak. Fölster wrinkled his brow furiously, but there was nothing he could do about it.

"Friends," said Klarmann, "I want to put forward a motion for the FDJ to write a letter to the Supreme

Council of the Soviets in Moscow, respectfully asking for the release of all youthful Germans arrested in the Eastern Zone since 1945."

Herbert Fölster bit his lip, and was livid with rage. He who had known the inside of a concentration camp for four years from his own bitter experience . . .

That evening we saw the last of Gerhard Klarmann. He went down for a swim and didn't return. Half an hour later, a Russian Military Police car stopped at the bathing hut, and then turned off from the lake, through the wood and on to the road leading to Königswusterhausen. Just before lights-out, Klarmann's belongings were fetched from the camp. Fölster told us that he had had to return home suddenly, because some member of his family was dangerously ill. A few minutes later, making my nightly last round of the camp, I happened to pass under Fölster's open window, and could hear him talking to his mother who lived with him.

"You see, Mother, that's the one and only way to eliminate Fascist stool pigeons."

I couldn't sleep that night. Klarmann a Fascist? And a stool pigeon at that? Next day, I had a word with Fölster about it. He gave me a sinister look.

"Whoever dares oppose us," he shouted, "will be crushed without mercy. Can't you see that this student know-all was smuggled into the camp by the Anglo-American Imperialists, merely to do a bit of sabotage?"

The food was really fine in our holiday camps. For the whole fortnight's board and lodging all that the boys and girls were required to pay was fifteen marks. Transport was free, too, and since the Soviets had provided us with all the lorries we needed, the coming and going of each group worked out smoothly and without a hitch. We stuck to the Party order and left politics severely alone. The boys and girls thoroughly enjoyed their fortnight in our camp, and when they got home they were full of praise for it. In that summer of 1947, few fathers or mothers in Berlin could have

offered their kids a holiday to compare with it. For the first time in years the youngsters were fed well enough to gain a few pounds in weight.

One warm Saturday in August, we took a walk over to Bestensee, a village near Paetz. In the Bestensee Inn, a "social" was in progress that evening. There were twelve of us boys, and we picked the prettiest village girls to dance with. We weren't refused, for evidently the girls were glad of a change from the village bumpkins they danced with regularly every Saturday evening.

But the virile beaux of Bestensee took a dim view of this, and when they noticed that we belonged to the FDJ, it made them see red. They started a concentrated attack, snatched their girls away, and gave us a good hiding. We were all bleeding profusely as we beat a shameful retreat, followed by howls and sneers, and by more tangible missiles too. "Bolshie suckers, Communist pigs!" they screamed, and the ashtrays and beer mugs which they threw after us scored many a hit or near-miss.

It was quite dark, and as we came out of the park, a heavy iron pipe thrown after us missed us by inches. It all but killed me and a pal of mine. That made us turn to fight again. We dashed back into the inn, lashing out to left and right. The girls screamed as they jumped off the dance floor, on to tables and benches. Meanwhile, a free-for-all was in progress all over the place. I got hold of a chair, broke off a leg and bashed it on somebody's thick skull. Someone else kicked me under the knee, and as I fell headlong on to another of the louts, pummelling him all the time, yet another one clouted me over the head, and I saw a bench lifted to be crashed down on me. Or was it that grey wall, the dreaded grey wall? Good God, not now, please not just now!

At that moment, the sound of police whistles could be heard through the din, and an officer, pistol in hand, stormed into the room. Behind him were some Russian soldiers. To me all this seemed to happen behind a

veil, for I was almost out, but I just managed to fish my identity card out of my pocket. It was the sort carried by every Party official, and bore a request in Russian to all Soviet authorities to give the bearer their protection. In the midst of the mêlé I held up my card and shouted: "Stalin! Stalin! Stalin!" I could not think of anything else to say.

Anyway, it seemed to be effective, for the officer noticed me and beckoned to two soldiers to get me out. Meanwhile, the German police had also arrived. All was uncannily quiet now. The room looked like a battlefield. We were taken into custody, the whole twelve of us, and about as many of the local boys. We were all of us bleeding, and some of us looked quite messy. But now we grinned at one another. It had been a tough fight, but a fair one. We all spent the night in clink in the Königswusterhausen police-station, and next morning we FDJ boys were sent back to the camp. The Bestensee boys were dumped into a Russian lorry.

They have never been heard of since.

The newspapers carried a headline: "Fascist thugs assault FDJ functionaries on dance floor."

When I read it, it seemed unbelievable, and I ran to Fölster.

"Look, Herbert, look! We must do something about this. Surely this is all wrong?"

Fölster gave me a derisive glance. "My dear Karlheinz," he said, "you are really still very inexperienced politically."

On September 15th, 1947, I was sent for by the boss. I was to report to Captain Szvershinsky in the Karlstrasse. For the first time I entered the building of the Soviet Central Kommandantura.

There was no sentry outside it—only inside, behind the big folding doors. In the reception office a German was on duty. I was sent to the waiting room which was full of people seeking some permit or other. No one dared to speak in more than a whisper, and every-

one perched on their chairs as if they were glued to them. When an officer or soldier entered to fetch someone, it was as though for an interrogation rather than a harmless interview.

Szvershinsky's office, considering the eminence of its occupant, was strangely bare and shabby. A wobbly desk with a couple of telephones, a shelf of Russian books, a chair or two for visitors—that was all, except, of course, for the inevitable picture of Stalin over the desk.

"You very good comrade," he said, and then he shook my hand like a kindly uncle and gave me a bonus of 500 marks and a *pajok*.

*Pajoks*, i.e. parcels doled out by the Soviet authorities, came in various grades. The lowest one for the small fry contained merely flour, a bottle of vodka and a few hundred cigarettes. The highest one, for ministers and other top-notchers, included pounds of caviare and other delicacies. Mine was a very good medium specimen. It weighed 20 lbs. and contained four bottles of vodka, three of liqueur, a thousand cigarettes, butter, flour, sausage, fruit conserves and soap. Evidently the authorities approved of my work.

I was not quite so happy about it myself. I had the ugly feeling of having got myself involved in some pretty dirty business, and of having just received the wages of sin.

### III

OCTOBER 15TH, 1947. In Helmstedt—soon to provide front-page news as the border check-point between the Soviet Zone and the West — and in nearby Marienborn, the church clocks struck eleven. It was a cold night. The moon was hidden by clouds. Just the right kind of weather for crossing the border surreptitiously, as the young fellow who was laboriously crawling through the undergrowth was trying to do. He was only nineteen, but he had lost a leg in the war, and they never gave him an artificial one. His crutches stuck out of his rucksack, and he still wore his shabby *Wehrmacht* pants. Suddenly he stumbled over some empty tins. They made a hell of a clatter, a dog barked and soon the boy felt a grip on his shoulder. Strong arms dragged him out of the undergrowth.

They belonged to British soldiers who, when they saw that the young fellow had only one leg, treated him less roughly. In fact, they treated him very kindly. They gave him a cigarette, bundled him into a car and took him to their officer for interrogation. The officer could have had him arrested, but he took pity on the boy, gave him another cigarette and told him to buzz off.

So the youngster tried again—this time a few kilometres further south. But he was unlucky again, stumbled and made a noise. There were voices nearby and a shot was fired. This time he had been caught by the Russians, who took him to their Command Post.

When the young man turned out to have hitch-hiked all the way from Cologne to make his way to the *Jugend-Hochschule* at Bogensee, the Russians

treated him like a hero who had broken through the British blockade. They filled him up with good food and vodka, took him to the train and gave him a ticket to Bernau, near Berlin. But on the way to the station he could see his Russian escorts behaving in a rather less friendly manner to a woman they also happened to have caught trying to cross the border. They confiscated her rucksack and all her bags, and sent her back with nothing but the clothes she stood up in. Maybe she was a smuggler, trying to cash in on the Black Market, but as likely as not she was just a poor wretch robbed of all she owned in the world.

At Bernau, the young fellow from Cologne was met by a car and taken to the new Bogensee Youth School, splendidly installed in what used to be one of Dr. Goebbels' luxurious summer residences. It is a palatial villa, and they say that the Propaganda Minister of the Third Reich used to throw wild weekend parties there with pretty film-stars, while admonishing the starving populace to persevere and toil on to victory. "At the Threshold of a New Life" is the bold inscription over the gate of Schloss Bogensee, but even that dates from the Goebbels days when, alternating with its more private uses at week-ends, the Schloss served as a holiday retreat for the *élite* of the Hitler Youth. It was now used for precisely the same purpose, except that the ideology dispensed in these pleasant surroundings was rather different.

The young chap from Cologne was sent up to room No. 8, his room-mates being Karl Hertel, Fritz Wolters and Karlheinz Schaeffer. Hertel was twenty-one and an apprentice carpenter, but in his more important capacity he was FDJ district leader in Halle, one of the more important towns in the Eastern Zone. Wolter was also twenty-one, but without trade or craft beyond his function as a youth leader. The newcomer from Cologne—his name was Kurt—told his room-mates of his experiences at the border. He was very angry at that poor woman having had all



her belongings pinched by the Russian soldiers ; and when, in turn, the others asked him whether the British authorities and troops exploited the Germans in their Zone, Kurt merely shook his head.

"There is no such thing," he said.

Later that evening, he was sent for by Tropitz, the head of the school. After an hour or so, he returned to the room, threw his crutches on to the table, sat down on his bed and started crying.

"They say I'm a spy," he sobbed, and told us how they had tried to make him admit that he had been sent to Bogensee by the British and American imperialists who had ordered him to plot Fascist provocations.

There was nothing we could do except tell him not to worry, and to enjoy the course at Bogensee as much as he could. This was an extensive and very thorough course of indoctrination. It was to last eleven weeks, and its male and female members comprised as many as eighty FDJ officials ; in addition there were twenty-eight who had come from Western Germany, forty-eight who were members of the SED, four who belonged to the CDU (Dr. Adenauer's Christian Democratic Union), two who were members of the LDP (the Liberal Party) and twenty-six who were not organised in any political party at all.

"It is our first duty to stress and to preserve the supra-party character of our movement," said the supreme leader of the FDJ, Erich Honecker, at the solemn opening ceremony in the great reception hall of Schloss Bogensee. He exhorted us to do our best for that great task of enlisting the youth of Western Germany as convinced and enthusiastic adherents of our own movement.

Once again I forgot all the unpleasant little incidents which, during the last two months, had made me doubt the greatness of our cause. After all, they were petty affairs ; and what, indeed, could be a greater and nobler task than striving for the rights of youth throughout the whole of Germany? What, indeed, for

any young German could be a finer ideal than doing his bit to achieve the unity of his country? "At the Threshold of a New Life" was surely a fitting motto for this house, I thought, more fitting than ever now. I was proud and happy to be there.

Honecker's speech wasn't very long, for he was never much of an orator, though being a member of the SED Central Committee, he was undoubtedly a bigshot in the Party. He too, incidentally, had been in Nazi concentration camps and gaols for years, and with Herbert Fölster had been freed by the Red Army when it conquered Brandenburg.

Apart from Honecker, the main speaker at the opening ceremony was Fred Müller, who was soon after to build up the State Security Service in Mecklenburg, and to become even more prominent as the chief organiser of all the sporting events in Eastern Germany. Müller made a rather less conciliatory speech. He said it was time to organise underground FDJ cells all over Western Germany, so as to be able to put the Fascists under proper pressure, once the time was ripe.

Schloss Bogensee had originally been confiscated by the Soviet authorities, who had later presented it to the FDJ. It's a very posh place, with carpets in every bedroom, and the magnificent library remains exactly as Goebbels had built it. Or rather, the shelves remain, the books, of course, being somewhat different. Practically the whole of Marxist literature could be found on these shelves.

The only survivor of former days was the old man who still looked after the boiler-room, just as he had done when Goebbels was in residence. He told us of the processions of magnificent Mercedes cars that used to drive up for the Doctor's parties, and how, at both ends of the drive and invisible to visitors, there was an arrangement of mirrors by which the SS guards could register the number plates of every car coming up the drive. Goebbels famous *Sauna*, the tea-pavilion,

the guest-house and his mother-in-law's flat had all been destroyed. But there was enough left and re-decorated to make the 1947 version of Bogensee definitely appear to us visitors the "Threshold of a New Life".

But this was no holiday, and the syllabus of the course was exacting, to say the least of it. Our working day started at 6.30 a.m., and sometimes we didn't get through the agenda before 11 p.m. At midday we got an hour's rest. Here is a list of the subjects dealt with:—

*Marxist Philosophy and Hegelian Dialectics*  
*Materialist Concept of History*  
*The Marxist Theory of Economics*  
*General History, particularly of Recent Times*  
*History of the Working Class Movement*  
*History of Art and Literature*  
*History of the Communist Parties*  
*Rudiments of Pedagogy and Psychology*  
*Theories and Crimes of Fascism*  
*The Life of Joseph Stalin*  
*Agrarian Reform by the Redistribution of German Soil*

Rather a lot for youngsters who hadn't had much proper schooling, even though most of the eighty of us had been given a more or less thorough grounding in the Marxist way of thinking. Each of us had attended some Party School or other, and each of us had been in charge of classes. Here, in the *Jugend-Hochschule*, we were to be given a special cramming, the main idea being to win non-party folks to Marxism, to turn the accomplished Marxists into fanatics, and to make members of the bourgeois parties feel ashamed of not being themselves Marxists.

At the end of the third day I was appointed *Lehrgangsvertreter*, which involved duties approximating to those of a shop-steward. That same evening the head of the school, Tropitz, sent for me and saddled me with rather a strange personal duty. I was to

report to him regularly on the "atmosphere" of the course, and on what the participants thought and said about him and the other masters.

I didn't like it. Did he want to use me as a stool-pigeon? Tropitz, who had a wife and a small daughter with him, enjoying a comfortable existence as master of Bogensee—poor old Tropitz seemed unable to cope. He knew rather less than many of his pupils, and he was certainly less intelligent than most of them. He couldn't even speak proper German, and we were all quick to notice that his lectures were ghost-written. Poor old Tropitz! It must have been his inferiority complex that made him employ such ugly methods.

Next day, during the midday rest hour, I dosed down on my bed. I had kept my shoes on, but I had remembered to fold my blanket and put it under my feet. That evening I saw a notice on the blackboard: "Karlheinz Schaeffer is a Fascist, because he fails to respect public property."

Boiling with indignation, I tore down the notice and flung it on the desk of one of the masters. He was a man who had been trained in Soviet schools for years, and knew how to deal with the situation. He shut the door quietly and offered me a cigarette and a glass of vodka. He talked to me very kindly, and then took me down to the cinema originally installed by Goebbels. He instructed the projectionist to run a short film which gave gruesome evidence of how the SS used to behave in Russia. I stared at the screen, flabbergasted and deeply shocked. He told me that this was a documentary film, and took me back to his office again.

"Karlheinz," he said, "you will probably think that this has nothing to do with your shoes and your blanket. But do believe me, it's got everything to do with them. By your behaviour, however unimportant it may seem to you, you have proved that the Fascist idea of a master race still exists in your mind, and that you haven't yet got rid of the original ideology of Nazism. You search your soul as critically as you

can, and then you will realise that you are not yet quite free from the shackles of the past."

Hanging my head in shame I went back to my room. That teacher was only four years older than I, but how right he was! Apparently, I was still far from standing on "the threshold of a new life". Next day, I officially reported for *Selbst-Kritik*, and publicly admitted and explained my misdeed. I felt I'd got to keep searching my own mind and learning from my past mistakes.

There was nothing unusual about this. It was part of the curriculum for each of us, once a fortnight, to stand up in public and do a spot of *Selbst-Kritik*. We were told that this was a matter of elementary morale and discipline, and that we owed it to the decency of our movement and our cause. Everyone had to do it, and while most of us were a bit embarrassed at first, we soon got used to it and after a while even began to like it; and indeed almost to become obsessed by it. It was like a church confessional—soothing and deeply satisfying.

"Karlheinz, will you come out here for a moment, please."

Joachim Tennert was standing at the door. He worked in the school administration, and was nearly ten years older than most of us—a calm, intelligent man who had been groomed in Soviet schools and knew something about office work, book-keeping and so on.

What the hell did he want? I was in the middle of a class. He took me out to the car which every third day brought us mail from FDJ and SED Headquarters in Berlin.

"Where can I talk to you?" whispered the driver.

We got into the car and he shut the door carefully as soon as we were seated inside.

"I have a strictly confidential Party order for you," he said. "You are to report on Tropitz. The Central Committee wants to know all about him, and in great detail, too."

So that was it. Tropitz wanted me to report on the members of the course ; the Party wanted me to report on Tropitz. What the devil was the meaning of it all? What the hell did I care about these internal intrigues among the leaders? I was an FDJ official. I was here to learn something. I had been a Hitler Youth leader and had been sincere about it. I was just as sincere now in my conviction that it was right to belong to the FDJ. But I was no damned informer. And I'd jolly well say so when I saw Tropitz tomorrow.

All this happened on the afternoon of November 4th, 1947. That evening, in the common-room, I was playing a game of chess with Ursula Hassel. Ursula was a twenty-year-old seamstress from Thuringia—a girl with whom every boy in the school had fallen in love at first sight—but in a very respectful and distant sort of way. Not one of us would have dared to make advances to Ursula, but we all admired her, because she was so calm, and kind, and good, and we all wanted to be respected by her. I too, of course ; so I was quite proud to be sitting at the chessboard opposite her, with the other boys envying me. It was difficult to realise, though, that this hazel-eyed and shy little fairy queen, as pretty as a picture, was a leading FDJ official in Gera, her home town.

Ursula interrupted the game and whispered : "I say, Karlheinz, what on earth have you got against me?"

What was that? I wondered whether I had heard aright.

"I think you and I should have this out quite openly," she continued. "You see, Tropitz has warned me against you, and has told me to report on you regularly. I really don't know what to tell him."

Now that really was the limit ! When Tropitz had asked me the other day to report to him on all members of the course, he had specially mentioned Ursula. This had seemed to me so daft at the time that I had put it out of my head. But now I remembered and told Ursula. At least we two knew where we stood.

As I was putting the chessmen away, a fellow called Bormann suddenly came up to me. He had looked at me rather strangely all the evening—or, at least, so I imagined. Ernst Bormann was ten years older than most of us, and had hardly opened his mouth yet in any of the classes. He wore a continual friendly smile and was extremely courteous and polite to everybody, much more so than most of us; for though some of the boys and girls had a “bourgeois” family background, the general tone and atmosphere of the school was one of the proletarian heartiness. It came naturally to most of us, and was adopted by almost all the others—except for Bormann. On the rare occasions on which he was asked a question in class, his stock answer seemed to be: “Oh, you had better ask one of our young friends here. I am sure I can’t express myself nearly as well as they can.” Real high-falutin’ talk it seemed to me and most of my pals; and we were agreed among ourselves that this fellow Bormann didn’t seem great shakes as a student. Now he had been sort of grinning at me all the evening. He was grinning at me again and, as I turned rather abruptly to leave, he held me back.

“Just a moment,” he said. “Wait till the others have gone.”

When we were alone in the room, he put his hand in his breast pocket and took out a police badge.

“Look here,” he said, “you had better know that I am a detective inspector.”

He showed other documents indentifying him as a member of AK 5 in the Criminal Investigation Branch of the Berlin police. He also showed me a letter from the SED Central Committee, written both in German and in Russian indentifying him as a police officer on special duty.

Bormann spoke to me as if we were old friends.

“My dear Karlheinz,” he said, “you must come to a quick decision whether or not you want to comply with Party orders. We’ve got to convict this fellow Tropitz. So far as I am concerned, being just a police-

man, I am mainly interested in the money he has embezzled, and the food he has stolen. As for the political aspects of the case, that's your business. I dare say the bosses at Party Headquarters will want to know all about them."

That night I woke up suddenly. Had I heard someone screaming? My room-mates seemed to have done so, too.

"Are you awake?" I asked.

"Sure," said Kurt. I jumped out of bed to go into the corridor, but the door was locked from the outside. I groped my way to the light switch, but it didn't work. Another horrible scream. This was unbearable. I could hear Kurt muttering and fiddling with his crutches. It was quiet now outside. But there were steps in the corridor. Very quietly the door turned in our door. The light was working again.

Next day, I learned from Ernst Bormann what had happened. It was Joachim Tennert who had been howling like an animal that night. A week earlier he had been given an assignment to go to Western Germany to start some anti-British and anti-American propaganda by spreading rumours and so on. In addition, he was to report to the Central Committee on certain persons, whose names and circumstances had been confided to him. Tennert had declined the assignment, and would not allow himself to be cajoled or bullied into reconsidering his decision. So Tropitz had informed the NKVD (Russian Secret Police). Tennert had got to hear of this, and when the Russians arrived had tried to get away. He hadn't got very far, though; he was shot in the leg, captured, brought back to the house and beaten mercilessly. He was never heard of again.

Next morning Tropitz announced triumphantly that Tennert had been a Fascist spy and had got his just deserts. Up in our room, Karl Hertel, a room-mate, suggested we should do something publicly to show our contempt for Tennert's behaviour. I hit him in the face with my shoe. Had I then known what I





Men. He greets the East German President, Wilhelm Pieck.



Robert Wagner addressing

g during the Railway Strike of 1951.



learned later, that Hertel used to report on all his room-mates to Tropitz day by day, I should have hit him more than once. As it was, he took the blow without a word. He told the others that he had stumbled over a tree trunk and hurt his face.

Quite suddenly, Ursula Hassel had to quit the course. It was a sad story. She had been given leave of absence to meet some relations in nearby Bernau and, walking home through the woods at night, had been assaulted by a Russian soldier and brutally raped. It had happened quite near Bogensee, and she had only just been able to creep home. She was found near the gate, very dishevelled and in a faint. She had lost a lot of blood. She was locked in her room, and Tropitz had called in a Red Army doctor. She was taken away in a Russian ambulance.

Bormann told me next day that he had to make Ursula sign a statement that she had met with an accident. "I know **this** is all wrong," he said, "but there is nothing else we could reasonably do. If the truth came out, it **would just** be exploited by irresponsible people to incite others against our Russian friends. Of course, it is just one more proof of how soldiering makes beasts of men. You can see now, Kailheinz, how important it is that there should be no more soldiers, and that there should never be another war."

Bormann had spent many bitter years in concentration camps, and was entitled to wear the medal of the victims of the Nazi regime. As for Ursula, she was nursed back to health at Soviet expense and later given a good job. The Russian soldier who had raped her was severely punished.

One day, as I was sitting in the library, trying to grasp the meaning of a passage of Lenin's which was a bit above my head, I suddenly felt my head grow cold and numb. The handsome oak shelves seemed to bend and come up at me. And then they were shelves

no longer. They were grey walls creeping nearer and nearer. Just before toppling off my chair, I could see Bormann jump up and come to my rescue.

When I came to, I was in my own room. Tropitz came to my bedside, but he seemed behind a veil. I didn't understand what he was talking about as he squeezed something between my fingers and held my hand. I was in pain. If only they would leave me alone. I didn't want to see anybody.

Meanwhile, rumours of the Tennert affair and of Ursula's mishap spread. The atmosphere in the school was becoming unpleasant. Some members of the bourgeois parties said openly that Bogensee stank. They wanted to go home.

When I was up again, Ernst Bormann suggested that we should call a meeting: pupils only, excluding Tropitz and the other masters.

"We must put our house in order, Karlheinz, and restore a decent atmosphere here. The bourgeois mustn't get a false impression. We've got to do something about it."

Very well, then. At supper I called for a general meeting. A few minutes later Tropitz sent for me. I found him in his sitting-room with his small daughter on his lap. His wife was sitting beside him, knitting. It was a charming family scene. Tropitz hugged his child and looked at me earnestly and expectantly. I didn't like it a bit.

"Well, Karlheinz, why did you call a meeting?"

I lied in his face: "I want them to pass a resolution in support of you for the benefit of the Central Committee of the FDJ."

Settling the child in the crook of his left arm, he got up, came over to me and shook my hand.

"Thank you, Karlheinz," he said.

I felt a swine.

At the meeting, I faced all our eighty boys and girls. The most reliable of the SED members had been informed by Bormann of his true identity. I opened the meeting by stating that Bormann wished to say

something about Tropitz who, so far, had been known to us as a decent and conscientious teacher.

Just then Bormann, who was sitting near the door, suddenly pushed it open, and the impact sent Tropitz flying down the corridor. "Our Head has been listening at the door," said one of the Christian Democrat members. There was dead silence, and then Bormann spoke. He accused Tropitz of Gestapo methods, fraud, embezzlement and inefficiency. This was certainly a severe indictment, but Bormann gave chapter and verse, quoted figures, named witnesses. Unanimously, the meeting decided that the school should go on strike until Tropitz had been relieved of his post. He was called in and asked to answer the charges. He merely shouted and threatened to hand us all over to the Russians. Bormann grabbed him by both his lapels, lifted him and chucked him through the open door into the corridor.

So we went on strike. Some of the bourgeois members started packing their trunks.

Next morning, Hermann Axen arrived from Berlin—a pretty important Party bigshot, though not nearly so high up in the hierarchy yet as he was to become a few years later, when he would topple Eisler, the Minister of Propaganda, and make himself virtually the dictator of press and radio. At the time of which I am speaking, he was merely an executive member of the FDJ Central Committee at Berlin Headquarters.

"Where is Karlheinz Schaeffer?" he asked imperiously as he got out of his official car. I was sent for and introduced to him. He hadn't a shake or a friendly word for me or anybody else.

"I want to speak to you alone," he said, and as soon as we were closeted in one of the offices, he let go: "You are a damned nuisance and a crass opportunist. We know all about your past, and don't you forget it. You seem to have some personal grudge against Comrade Tropitz. Mark my word, you haven't heard the last of this!"

I was given no chance to get a word in edgeways,

or to show this fat, overweëning man the reverse side of the medal. He locked me in the room and called another meeting of the entire school. I no longer tried to understand all this. I just stood at the window and looked out over the bare treetops in the wintry garden. I could not help thinking of the proud inscription over the entrance to this house: the Threshold of a New Life. It was getting foggy outside. I was beginning to wonder whether I was just plain crazy or whether all the others were.

Then the key turned in the lock: It was Ernst Bormann, grinning all over his big, kindly face. He took me to the hall and showed Axen his identity papers.

"Buzz off, Hermann," he said calmly, "and please understand that, unless this matter is cleared up by to-morrow, we will go direct to Wilhelm Pieck."

I admired Bormann. As for Axen, he got into his car and drove straight back to Berlin. He didn't say a word and was quite pale.

We didn't have to go to Wilhelm Pieck, because he was expected at Bogensee, anyway. In two days' time, the President was scheduled for an official visit to the school. Bormann and I sat down to draft a comprehensive report on the state of affairs. I was to hand this report to the President before he made his official speech.

On the dot of the appointed time he got out of his big, black, Russian limousine. He beamed at all of us youngsters. We were lined up in the courtyard and it was bitterly cold. But I hardly felt it, for I was all agog with excitement to see the impressive figure and the kind, rosy face of our white-haired President. I felt that everything would be put right. Wilhelm Pieck would see to it, the supreme leader of our Party, the man who had united the two great working class movements, the man for whose wise and benevolent leadership all Germany had so much to be grateful.

Now we were all lined up behind him, slowly walking

towards the house. Suddenly I felt a mighty blow in the back, and crashed through the folding door. The breaking glass caused several cuts on my neck and face, and I bled like a pig as they carried me into the sickroom. Meanwhile, Bormann had managed to fish the report out of my pocket, and had found the opportunity to hand it to the President.

When I came to, Wilhelm Pieck stood at my bedside, and stroked my hair.

"Don't worry, my boy. Everything will be put right. The Party does not stand for injustice."

I was quite calm now and very happy. The President had stood at my bedside. He would put matters right. He would see to it just as surely as he would see to giving us a united Germany. Who but he could? He'd been a working man himself. He knew his German people. He knew that all we wanted was Peace and Justice and Unity.

Then the doctor came and looked serious. He gave me an injection. It was a few days before I'd be fit enough to travel. I finally returned to Berlin with Bormann, and we went straight to Erich Honecker's office at the Headquarters of the FDJ. Edith Baumann, his trusted deputy, was with him. I was not fit enough yet to say very much. Bormann made the report. He gave a very calm and factual description of events at Bogensee, and repeated the accusations that Tropitz was guilty of fraud and embezzlement. Honecker sent for Tropitz who was waiting outside in the anteroom. He denied everything. Then Bormann put a crumpled piece of paper on the table.

"Look at this scrawl," he said. "This is how Tropitz tried to obtain Karlheinz's signature for his whitewashing affidavit. He tried it on while the boy was practically unconscious. Fortunately, the room was on the ground floor, so I could watch it all through the window."

This trump card of Bormann's was quite a surprise to me. So it was a pencil that Tropitz had tried to squeeze into my hand when he stood at my bedside.

Honecker walked up to Tropitz without a word and slapped his face hard.

Even so, there wasn't much of a spring cleaning at Bogensee. Tropitz was suspended from duty, but he was allowed to stay on there with his family. Another headmaster was appointed, and the course was duly completed. At the final examinations, nearly all the class failed to pass, including Kurt, the one-legged boy from Cologne. The best marks were achieved by Karl Hertel, the informer.

Anyway, there was a close-of-term celebration, and since it was being honoured by the presence of the supreme FDJ leader, it had necessarily to be a large affair. Erich Honecker, indeed, attended it in person, and with him was Edith Baumann, his deputy and secretary. (A year or two later, he was made to marry her by order of the Party.)

It was certainly a spree; the tables were laden with delicacies that most of us had never seen in our young lives. All our wonted self-discipline went by the board, almost as quickly as the wonderful sandwiches; as for our proletarian vigilance, we certainly gave practical proof of that, most of us being sufficiently on the mark to deal with the cigarettes, sweets, chocolates and other items easily conveyable to trouser pockets.

At the height of these celebrations Honecker sent for me to meet him in Jeschke's room. Jeschke was one of the teachers, a very minor one, though, who used to be a special pal of Tropitz. My friend Bormann, the detective inspector, had meanwhile found out that it was Jeschke who had pushed me into the glass door when Wilhelm Pieck came to visit us—but as we couldn't prove it, there was nothing we could do about it. Jeschke had a very pretty young wife who lived with him in the school. I was always slightly embarrassed in her presence, particularly since she had asked me to tea, and brought the conversation



round to the relations between married women and unmarried men.

She had asked me to tea again and had worn a very pretty frock indeed. And as she had poured out, I couldn't help noticing that she didn't wear a brassière. She had seemed embarrassed as she put the teapot down, but had smiled and put her hand on my shoulder. I had sat as stiff as a poker, just as if I had sensed danger, for at that moment Tropitz and Jeschke had come in.

"We just wanted to get a book," Tropitz had said in what was meant to be a nonchalant tone. He took some book and left again, Jeschke trotting behind him. I drank up my tea and took leave of my hostess.

And now they were all here together in the same room—Frau Jeschke, her husband, Honecker, Fräulein Baumann, Bormann and Tropitz (yes, Tropitz, too, for in spite of his suspension from duty, he did take part in the end-of-term celebrations).

"Karlheinz," said Honecker harshly, "I am sorry to learn that you have misbehaved yourself with the wife of Comrade Jeschke."

Frau Jeschke was wearing a red pullover, neatly emphasizing her pretty figure. She gave Honecker a puzzled glance.

"Why," she interjected, "it was Comrade Tropitz and my husband who told me to get Schaeffer into a compromising situation."

She was as pretty as a picture, but she certainly wasn't very bright. They were all much embarrassed, particularly Tropitz and Jeschke. I looked at Bormann; for once the friendly grin had left his face. I had never seen him look so angry.

As for me, I was livid with rage. I shouted and swore that this was not a youth institution but a whore-house. I tore my FDJ-pin off my coat and threw it at Honecker's feet. He was quite calm, and didn't say a word. He picked it up and put it back on my lapel.

"You've lost something, Karlheinz," he said.

I tore the thing off and threw it down once more.

"Yes, I *have* lost something! I have lost my faith and my ideals!"

I ran out, banging the door behind me. I grabbed my overcoat. All I wanted was to get away from this, to get out into the fresh air. From the hall I could hear the comrades laughing and shouting; they were full of good food and drink. They had made the grade, and were all buddies now. The non-party boys and girls—all except one—had joined up now—they couldn't very well have helped it—and the bourgeois boys of the CDU and the LDP had also become proper SED members. They couldn't very well have helped it either. So everything was as it should be.

It was windy outside and bitterly cold, but it did me good to breathe the fresh air. I lighted a cigarette and tried to think things over. Was I doing the right thing to quit? That scene up at the Jeschke's was certainly pretty disgusting. But what had that got to do with the Party and with the FDJ? I remembered what Peter Heilmann had told me when, two and a half months ago, the course was inaugurated: "At the beginning of every new social order there is always a lot of muck on the top, and it takes some time for it to be eliminated by the healthy and decent elements. Sure enough, lots of mistakes will still be made, and much injustice will be done. But don't let that influence you, for you must always try to keep in sight the greatness of the cause, the strength of the Party as a whole and not the weakness of its individual members."

That's what Peter had said, and the mere thought of it made me calmer. If only I hadn't been so alone. Ever since that Ingeborg affair I hadn't touched a girl, and I hadn't had a single real friend. Just now I could have done with someone I could really talk to, someone who would understand what was on my mind.

Peter Heilmann? He was ten years older than I was. His father, Ernst Heilmann, was a very famous

member of the old *Reichstag*. He was a Social Democrat, and the Nazis had murdered him in a concentration camp. Peter was in charge of the Cultural Department of the Berlin FDJ. The others spoke of him as an "intellectual", usually adding some sneering or insulting adjective. They disliked him because they hadn't his knowledge and education. He knew a darned sight more than most of them rolled into one.

My cigarette had been ruined by the wind. I threw it away, went back to my room and lay down on my bed. Maybe that made me a Fascist again, so to be on the safe side I let my feet dangle. After an hour or so Honecker, Edith Baumann and Hermann Axen appeared. I sat on my bed between Honecker and Edith. Axen paced up and down the room excitedly, his head bowed, his eyes bulging.

"We owe you an apology, Karlheinz," he said, "but how could we know about all the muck accumulated in this place? You are a good lad, and we and the party are not likely to forget it. As for that fellow Tropitz, you can bet your life he'll have to answer before a Party tribunal."

Next day, I returned to Berlin with Ernst Bormann. He was strangely quiet, not at all his usual cheerful self. At the Friedrichstrasse Station we parted. "Good luck to you, Karlheinz," he said: "better luck than mine, I hope. I have been demoted to some bloody awful little place in Thuringia. All on account of that Tropitz affair. And take my word for it, there'll be no Party tribunal for Tropitz."

I gave Bormann a questioning glance, and he continued with a bitter smile: "You don't seem to have heard the latest news yet. Yesterday they co-opted Tropitz into the Central Committee of the Party. He is quite a bigshot now, our dear old Comrade Tropitz."

December 20th, 1947, 10 a.m. I reported back for duty at Heinz Kessler's office. He was the chief of

the Berlin FDJ, and he happened to be out. So I only got to see his deputy, an unpleasant dwarf with shifty eyes. His name was Zeese.

"Ah," he sneered from behind his desk, "bloody little Schaeffer, the opportunist, is here again. You seem to be making a hobby of starting filthy intrigues against decent people like Comrade Tropitz! But you can bet your sweet life, my boy, you haven't heard the last of that one yet."

I turned on my heel and left his office without a word. In the anteroom his secretary whispered to me: "You'd better scram. He's applied to the NKVD for a warrant for your arrest."

December 20th, 1947, 3 p.m. I reported in Kronenstrasse at the office of the supreme FDJ chief, Erich Honecker.

"My dear Karlheinz, we have much to thank you for—very much."

He beamed jovially and shook my hand. Then he handed me two *pajoks*, some suiting material and 800 marks.

He gave me his friendly attention when I told him what had happened that morning in Zeese's office. Then he lifted the receiver and asked to be put through to Zeese. He told me to wait for the call, and when it came I could hear him say: "Zeese? Karlheinz Schaeffer is here with me, and I'm just ringing to tell you that you are an unmitigated idiot and a bloody fool!"

Then he banged down the receiver and winked at me with a friendly grin.

## IV

IT WAS still December 20th, 1947. At 4.30 p.m. on that eventful day I was ordered to report at the Soviet Central Kommandantura, to Captain Szvershinsky's office. Once again I was in that sombre waiting-room ; once again I was aware of the oppressive silence, and the general atmosphere of apprehension whenever the Russian soldier on duty spelt out the name of the next one to go in.

Szvershinsky had an impressive row of medals on his tunic, and steel-framed spectacles on his nose. In some agitation, he was pacing up and down his room, which was as soberly and sparsely furnished as a waiting-room at the Assistance Board.

"You good comrade," he assured me. "Now new job, see? *Krawall* against Social Democrats in West Berlin, see? *Krawall* against American Imperialists, too, see?"

*Krawall* just means a row, an altercation. But the Captain, in spite of his limited German vocabulary, made it quite clear that he had no objection if the *krawall* should fail to stop short of a mere bandying of words.

That December 20th was quite an important day, for it marked the beginning of a new policy.

Several weeks later, one February evening in 1948, about a hundred men and women made their slow way through the Eisenachstrasse in Mariendorf, a suburb of West Berlin. They were on their way home, but "home" to them meant a Displaced Persons' Camp. They were Polish Jews, all of them. They came from a meeting at which they had been guests of the FDJ district organisation in nearby Tempelhof. The leader of that particular FDJ group was Karlheinz Schaeffer.

Heinz Kessler had been a motor mechanic at Chemnitz, and had fought as a soldier in the Red Army; he had yet to become a general in the East German Armed Forces, and was at this time merely a Party bigshot and head of the Berlin Youth Movement. He had come to address our guests, and a very good speech he made. For the first time, maybe, those poor, much harassed Polish Jews could hear their problems tackled sensibly and in a deeply humane fashion. For the first time, maybe, they were made to feel a shade less bitter towards Germany and the Germans who had inflicted so horrible a fate on so many of their race—a fate which they themselves had escaped by what must now have seemed almost a miracle.

Kessler's sincere and intelligent speech had warmed their hearts, and on their own initiative they had improvised a collection. Cheerfully and gratefully they had donated 1,000 marks to the FDJ.

Now they were on their way home, but as they passed the wall of the *Dreifaltigkeits* Cemetery, they were suddenly assaulted by a dozen or more thugs. No one could recognise their faces, because it was pitch dark and there was no street lighting. The thugs were armed with sticks and truncheons. There was some bloodshed, and much crying and wailing. Four elderly women were severely wounded.

Next morning, all the East Berlin newspapers ran front-page stories about this disgusting affair. The leader columns came to the inescapable conclusion that the Mayor of the suburb must be held responsible for the shocking lawlessness of Mariendorf.

The Mayor happened to be a member of the Social Democratic Party.

No-one who read those thundering articles knew that the thirty ruffians were members of the East Berlin FDJ, handpicked and secretly instructed to cause trouble.

I didn't know, either.

For a wage of 380 marks a month I was now a full-time official of the FDJ. It was my first properly

paid job, my first regular employment. I was district leader at Tempelhof, and my card-index file contained the names of 28 boys and 8 girls. These 36 were my very own private flock.

As for the assignment given me by the Russians, I had no scruples nor felt any compunction about it. To incite opinion against the Americans, and to stir up rows and rioting seemed to me a very proper thing to do, and a thoroughly worthy and patriotic occupation. At my post in West Berlin, I felt much like a German agent in enemy territory. After all, I could see with my own eyes how the young were being neglected by the Western authorities, and felt very sore with the SPD borough councillors who bothered so little about the local boys and girls, and left them to run wild.

Over in the Eastern Sector we had brand-new youth hostels and brand-new laws for the protection and support of young people. Here, in the West, one could see them loafing in the streets and spending their ill-gotten gains in pubs and black-market dives. I couldn't help thinking how much better conditions were in the East, where decent club-rooms were provided for us youngsters, and where almost palatial education-centres arose among the ruins; where all intelligent boys and girls were given a chance of improving their minds and learning something; where most of us had gladly volunteered to give of our spare time and our youthful strength, and to help in building up our land and our cities. Indeed, we were about to build a new world.

*Nie, nie woll'n wir wieder Waffen tragen,  
Nie, nie woll'n wir wieder Krieg.  
Lasst die hohen Herrn sich selber schlagen,  
Wir machen nicht mehr mit.\**

\*This used to be a very popular marching song among the Socialist Youth Groups even in pre-Hitler days, and particularly in the period after the First World War. Literally translated it means: Never, never shall we bear arms again. Never, never shall we go to war. Let the gentry fight it out amongst themselves. We want no part of it. . . .

We used to sing lustily to a stirring tune, deeply convinced of the rightness of our cause. We were grateful for the fine chance given to each of us, provided he was willing to learn and to work. We were proud of our towns and villages, ruled by mayors barely out of their 'teens, and in our study-group meetings we had been taught to recognise and to fight the enemies of the working class.

I had certainly recognised the enemy right here in my own district, and, by gosh, I was going to fight him. I had no patience with kids loafing in the streets and pubs, aping American cowboy manners. If that was all the West had to offer to me and the likes of me, then to hell with the West! We'd damned well show them, and give them back all they wanted! We'd dish out to them as much as they could take!

I was mighty proud of my assignment.

From time to time the U.S. Army unit stationed at Tempelhof airport doled out a hot meal to local boys and girls. By God, they could do with it! For in that February of 1949, food was still as scarce in Berlin as it had been two years earlier. The Americans did not ask to see a Party ticket. Anyone who was hungry was welcome. And how hungry those children were. They lined up in a long queue, more sensibly and patiently than adults would have done. Emaciated, shivering with cold and sad-eyed, most of them weren't even properly clothed. Their fingers were so frozen that they could barely hold the mugs and enamel plates handed out to them.

As for the Americans ministering to them, what a difference! Well fed, warmly clothed, strong and armed. Each one of them the very symbol of power. Their pink faces seemed to show no emotion as they watched the long procession of wretchedness pass by.

Once again an FDJ squad on a very special and secret assignment came over from the East, but this time I knew all about it, and had gone to meet the comrades at the Tempelhof Station. For a very



special reason there was a girl among them, and she had her own very special instructions, too.

We went to the Tempelhof Airport, near the U.S. Army building, and started a row with the kids emerging with their mugs and enamel plates. We tripped up some of them, making them spill their soup. For a long time, and with remarkable patience, the Americans watched this going on from a distance. Finally, they seemed to get fed up, and we saw a very tall military policeman stalk towards us.

That was what we'd been waiting for. The girl comrade now got a well aimed shove, sprawling her right in the path of the Yank. As was to be expected, he put her on her feet again none too gently. This was the signal for the free-for-all we wanted. We were about a dozen hefty lads, and we went for them hell-for-leather. At first the Americans were much outnumbered, but one of them whistled up a special squad of military policemen, and then, of course, we were booted out in no time.

That was to be expected, too, and provided a juicy piece for our Own Youth paper, *Start*, the gist of which was that the Americans made a habit of enticing in starving Berlin children merely to vent their brutal sadism on them and knock the poor kids senseless.

A few days later I got a letter from Mr. Miller, the American Youth Officer, asking me to come and see him. Very well, I was willing to oblige. After all, we had met before. He was the self-same boxer-parson who had made that remark about the responsibility everyone must bear for himself.

I picked eighteen tough FDJ boys as a bodyguard, and took them along to Steglitz, a Western suburb, where Miller lived in a slap-up villa. The snow out there was still quite clean, the sun was shining, and there happened to be no rubble at all in that district. Even so, it was still Berlin.

At the door we were met by a military policeman, who sent my bodyguard off. "Go home, boys," he

said calmly, in perfect German. "Your boss is quite safe here. We'll look after him all right."

Very well. If that was the way they wanted it, it suited me. I ordered my squad about turn and marched ahead of them as smartly as I knew how.

A few days later I got a letter from Mr. Miller. If I didn't come of my own free will, he would have me fetched by the military police. I dashed to Karlstrasse and asked for an urgent interview with Captain Szvershinsky. I was quite excited, and felt very much like a hero about to be martyred by the Americans. Szvershinsky grinned, offered me a glass of vodka and a cigarette and said: "*Karosho!* Very good! You good comrade!"

I was told to see Mr. Miller. I appeared with both hands in my trouser pockets; I thought that looked rather impressive. Even so, he gave me his usual friendly grin. There were about ten other boys in the room, and since they were officials of the various bourgeois youth-groups, I already knew most of them. The room was very comfortably furnished, certainly less austere than Szvershinsky's, but I refused to be impressed by it. This, after all, was the home of a German family who had been kicked out by the Yanks. I still kept my hands in my pockets, and tried to look fierce.

"You are trying to look like a gangster," said Miller, but he was still grinning. He wasn't a bit angry or resentful. Even so, I had to give him tit for tat.

"I resent your tone. I am not a gangster, I am an official of the Free German Youth."

"Isn't that often much the same thing?" countered Miller, still grinning.

He pulled out a packet of cigarettes and offered it all round, except to me.

"I mustn't insult you by suggesting that you act against your principles," he said. "These are American cigarettes, but if you would like one, help yourself."

I hadn't smoked a decent cigarette for months, and the temptation was considerable. But I managed to

shake my head proudly. Miller now came down to brass tacks. He asked me to publish a denial of the *Start* story, and give the true facts of the case. After all, the story (though sub-edited out of all recognition) had been signed by me and I had also been interviewed about it on the East Berlin radio. He said that it was a matter of simple decency and fairness to set these things right and print the real truth.

I refused haughtily. Rather inappropriately, as I stared fiercely at Miller, I noticed that he was wearing a very nice rust-coloured silk shirt, and a green tie. He gave me his friendly grin again.

"Cheer up, old boy," he said. "Why don't you simply go to Karlstrasse and ask the man with the spectacles. I'm sure he would have no objection."

Damn the fellow! So he knew all about Szvershinsky! Even so, I felt that my turn had come now, and started a long speech on the sins of American Imperialism. But after a sentence or two Mr. Miller turned his back on me, went to the window, opened it wide and looked out at the reflection of the sun on the snow-capped trees. Then he turned round again and interrupted me.

"I wish you would go now, Herr Schaeffer. I just don't feel like having this beautiful day spoiled by propaganda slogans. Besides, I know them all. I can assure you that I could recite them very much better and more coherently than you are trying to do."

I stalked out and banged the door behind me, but as I marched along the corridor, it was opened again, and Miller called after me, once again wearing his cheerful grin: "Just in case you don't know, in America even very small children are taught that doors are fitted with handles."

He shut the door quietly behind him, and as I stalked out into the street, I couldn't help admitting to myself that the score stood 1-0 in Miller's favour.

Captain Szvershinsky listened attentively. He didn't bat an eyelid when I told him that Miller

seemed to know all about him. All he said was :  
"Good comrade ! Very good ! More *krawall* ! More *krawall* !"

I began to be worried about all this, and went along to see Peter Heilmann. I wanted him to tell me from whom I really should take my orders, the Russians, or the Central Council of the Free German Youth.

Peter rose from behind his desk, tall, thin and haggard. His untidy shock of dark, curly hair straggled over his collar.

"Come along," he said, "let's go and sit down quietly somewhere." He put his arm on my shoulder, and I suddenly felt that he might well be the loyal friend I had been looking for.

We walked along the Friedrichstrasse towards the Unter den Linden. Peter didn't say a word. He dug his hands into the pockets of his overcoat and seemed lost in thought. As we crossed Behrenstrasse and saw the great building of the SED Central Council looming up over that ocean of dust and rubble like a huge liner at sea, we looked at one another silently, remembering how often both of us had gone this way from Kronenstrasse to Behrenstrasse to get our orders.

We sat down in the State-sponsored Café Unter den Linden, and Peter started to talk. "Never forget," he said, "that the Soviet Union is the country where the great Socialist revolution made its start. Don't fall into the usual mistake of considering that we are superior to the Russians just because we are a little further ahead of them in the trimmings of civilisation. That means little compared with the fact that the Soviet Union has actually realised in practice the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin. It has made the rulership of the Proletariat a living reality. Whenever Szvershinsky gives you some friendly advice which you take to be an order, you can trust him to have some sound reasons for doing so. He has grown up in the homeland of Communism, and knows better than

any of us that the first essential is to break the power of Monopoly Capitalism, so as to give progressive ideas a chance to be realised."

That's what Peter Heilmann said to me.

Once more I was sent for by Szvershinsky. I was never quite at ease reporting at that big building in Karlstrasse, and I never quite knew what to make of this strange man. Sometimes he would put vodka and cigarettes on the table before us and everything was *karosho*; the next time, as likely as not, he would kick up a frightful fuss, calling me a slacker, a saboteur, and every other sort of name. By hook or by crook, he wanted more *krawall*. What on earth was he really after, anyway?

This time I didn't get a word in edgeways. Wearing my old sweater and pants bought off the peg in a State shop, and rather baggy at the knees, I stood before his desk and got ticked off properly. Stalin, the best friend of German youth, looked down at us from the wall where he provided the only highlight in that sombre room. Through the wall I could hear an altercation in Russian going on next door.

Szvershinsky was bending over his desk, and his steel-framed spectacles had slipped over his nose. One of my teachers at school used to look almost exactly like that, but, of course, he had not a row of medals on his coat. Szvershinsky gave me a piercing glance, and I wondered why, though I always felt uneasy in his presence, I somehow couldn't help liking him.

He growled, reached for the telephone and rapped out a few words in Russian. Presently a woman appeared, a civilian. Her black, shining hair was done up in a big bun behind. She was dressed in a black suit and green blouse, and enormous breasts bulged under her jacket. She wore no make-up, and no ornaments except long earrings. She might have been in her middle thirties, and her face, though strong and not unkindly, was singularly unattractive.

I had plenty of time to scrutinise her while Szvershinsky spoke to her at length, gesticulating excitedly and pointing at me. She was evidently an interpreter, because she finally turned and spoke to me in fairly good German, though with a strong Russian accent.

"Herr Kapitän Szvershinsky say he is not satisfied with your work. The Herr Kapitän has ordered you to see that German youth in your district recognises the aims of American Monopoly Capitalism, and of the Imperialists who are exploiting it. The Herr Kapitän has ordered you to see that German youth in your district decides for democracy and progress. The Herr Kapitän orders you to try once again, and to do as you are told."

She said all this in much the same tone as that of a child who has learnt a poem by heart and recites it to an audience of aunts and uncles. All the while, she stared out of the window with an expression of utter boredom.

"*Karoshō*," said Szvershinsky, as soon as she had finished. The woman departed and the Captain's face became wreathed in smiles. He rubbed his hands together, and then produced the vodka bottle and poured out a drink for both of us.

"You good comrade," he said. "And now to work!"

## V

I HAVEN'T yet mentioned that all the time I had been engaged on this political work, I had also been associated with the "Central Cultural Group", and that at Bogensee I had written some plays.

I know now that neither these plays, nor any of the other literary work I had attempted, came anywhere near professional standards. But there it was: I had seen and lived through a great deal during that first year or two following the war, and I tried to express myself somehow.

My first play, *Erkenntnis*, was simply the story of a boy who got into trouble with the law, but was lucky enough to come before a judge who was able to understand why, in the hopeless atmosphere of 1945-6, he almost inevitably went wrong. The judge acquitted the boy and sent him to a youth-camp, where he was taught to be a good craftsman and a decent citizen.

It was all rather amateurish, but we actually produced that play in the last week or two of the Bogensee course, and Erich Honecker had it printed. The 800 marks which he gave me on December 20th were actually an authorship fee.

My second play, *Menschen in Ketten*, (Men in Chains), dealt with the sufferings of the Jews under the Nazi regime, and stressed every decent German's duty to help those poor devils to-day. It was to that play's first night, incidentally, that we had invited the Polish Displaced Persons, little knowing how shockingly their visit would be abused.

Honecker and Kessler now seemed to think that I also had the makings of a producer and actor (for, needless to say, I played all the star parts myself).

Anyway, when the former started the Central Cultural Group of the FDJ, he put me in charge of it. I picked out twenty boys and girls, chose the plays, produced them and, of course, myself played all the best parts in them.

Naturally, it was all very naïve, though perhaps the enthusiasm of these youngsters had a certain appeal ; anyway, Wolfgang Langhoff, the producer-manager of the famous *Deutsches Theater*, invited us to perform Friedrich Wolf's *Der Arme Konrad* there, though at a matinée only. Wolf (later to be appointed East German Ambassador to Warsaw) was one of the favourite playwrights of the regime, author of *Professor Mamlock* and other famous plays, staged and filmed over in the western world, and quite probably Langhoff considered it politic to sponsor an FDJ production of one of his plays, however amateurish. That matinée, incidentally, took place on the day before Captain Szvershinsky had called me "good comrade". But that was not on account of my artistic efforts ; he was referring to my attempts at *krawall*.

One of the eight girls in my district group at Tempelhof was called Lilian. I'd often wondered exactly how this frail and gentle little person had come to be attracted to the FDJ. I was soon to find out—in fact, on the very night after I had been ticked off by Szvershinsky through his corpulent interpreter.

As I left the Russian's office that afternoon, I was a bit fed up and thought the time had come for some drastic action. So the first thing I did was to call a special meeting of all the officials of my group for that evening. I called it for the unusually late hour of ten o'clock, at Lilian's flat at 68 Kurfürstenstrasse, Tempelhof. It was a small flat, of course, but a rather more commodious and comfortable one than anyone else in our group could offer.

When I entered Lilian's sitting-room it was already half past ten, and my twelve officials, as well as our



hostess, had been waiting for me for half an hour. When they saw my grim face they became quite scared.

"Friends," I said solemnly, "we must try to get away. It's quite probable that we shall all be arrested to-night by the American secret police."

Eight of my men jumped up in a fright, and set off for the Eastern Sector without further delay. The other four wanted to go home first, to let their parents know.

Lilian and I remained behind. I told her we needn't be in quite such a hurry as all that to escape. She went into the kitchen and prepared a good meal for the two of us—a very good one indeed, for she got a regular supply of parcels from her mother in the Argentine.

Later, she came into the sitting-room, carrying a tray. She had laid the table prettily, and the candle-light gave the room a romantic look, even though it was bitterly cold. For some time I had felt that Lilian was the first girl I had ever really been in love with. This was quite different from my affairs with Ingeborg and the others. For one thing, I could talk to her so easily. I could tell her everything about my life, my work, my doubts—even about my yearnings for real friendship and companionship. I asked Lilian if she could give me that.

She got up silently, took my hand and, holding a candle, led me to the next room. There I found myself before a cot with a baby lying in it, fast asleep.

"This is my child," said Lilian.

Then she told me that she had been married, and that it was her husband, Werner Oertel, who had introduced her to the FDJ. He had been an official in it himself. He had died a year before, a victim of poliomyelitis . . .

When I had first hit on the idea of driving all my boys and girls of the Tempelhof district into East Berlin, I was mainly concerned with dodging Captain Szvershinsky's constant demands for "more *krawall*!"

But it had turned out to be quite a good idea after all, and the authorities had seemed to approve it. All we Tempelhof "fugitives" were now accommodated in the East, were constantly interviewed by press and radio, and even the great Heinz Kessler paid us the compliment of a personal visit. He saw to it that we were well lodged and looked after.

Once again I felt like a martyr to the cause of the FDJ ; and though I found it hard to convince myself of the truth of the statement, I could see it set forth in black and white in the newspapers : "These young FDJ heroes, after being persecuted by the American Imperialist terrorists, have fortunately managed to escape into the one sector of Berlin where they are not in danger of life and liberty, and where they can continue the good and independent work of their Youth Movement . . . " That was the gist of what was to be found in every East German periodical. They certainly made quite a mountain out of that little molehill !

This was a bit too much even for the cheerful and friendly Mr. Miller. He was evidently annoyed, for he signed an order barring the FDJ from all youth centres and hostels in the American Sector. Moreover, he made an official request through the Allied Kommandantura for my immediate dismissal. This was exactly what Szvershinsky had been waiting for. I was officially sacked from my post, and the Western Allies were notified of the fact. But there was so much ado about it in the Eastern Press that on the very day of my departure hundreds of new recruits joined the FDJ.

So far as I was concerned, I had no grounds for complaint, for my dismissal was only a formality, and the publicity made me the blue-eyed boy of the Movement. Nor did I need to live in any real fear or danger of arrest by the Western authorities. As a matter of fact ; we all returned to Tempelhof to celebrate my marriage to Lilian in her flat. My mother had cleaned and ironed my dark suit, but she didn't come

to the wedding, nor did my father. They disliked Lilian. Heinz Kessler came, representing the Berlin FDJ, and gave us a number of kitchen utensils, a food parcel and 500 marks. Even Captain Szvershinsky sent us his congratulations and some bottles of vodka. On the whole, it was a somewhat unromantic wedding.

Kessler's wedding present was a new and bigger job. I was appointed teacher at the FDJ district school at Rahnsdorf, a suburb of Berlin. This was a very big establishment, much larger than Pactz, and it was there that we spent our honeymoon.

Little Gerald, Lilian's baby boy, was only just over a year old, and we were worried about him, because he suffered from asthma. One particularly hot August day, Lilian had had to go to town, and in an interval between classes I ran up to our room to look after the baby.

He was dead. He lay in his cot and didn't breathe.

I don't know to this day what exactly happened during those awful minutes. Later, I heard Lilian coming up the stairs, singing cheerfully. I knew then that I would have to face her, and tell her that her child was dead. I remember that she fainted, and that I suddenly had the crazy notion that maybe little Gerald wasn't dead at all, and that a doctor could still save him.

The doctor lived on the other side of the canal which runs alongside the camp. One had to take a punt to cross it. I took the small, lifeless form in my arms, and we ran down to the punt. I steered the clumsy craft towards the landing-stage on the opposite side. In front of me sat Lilian, holding the child on her knees, her tears falling on the lifeless little face as she uttered tender, crazy words, pressing the small body against her own, as if she could infuse some of her own life into it. I could not bear to look any longer.

The doctor shook his head. We were reproaching ourselves bitterly. Maybe we hadn't given the little

chap all the care he needed. But the doctor told us that there had never been a hope for him. He could not possibly have lived to see the end of the year.

The days before the funeral were almost unbearable. My wife was in such a state that I hardly dared leave her alone for as much as an hour. Even so, the work of the school had to go on. What was more, on Sunday, the day after the child's death, I was under strict instructions to take part in a big demonstration, organised all over Berlin for the victims of Fascism. The order came from the Central Council of the FDJ, and when I said that I couldn't attend because my wife needed me, the representative of the Central Council told me that I still remained a bit bourgeois.

Orders were orders, so the next day I stood in the huge square at the eastern end of the Unter den Linden, surrounded by some twenty thousand other people. To-morrow I would stand at Gerald's little grave, but now here I was demonstrating for German Unity and a just peace treaty, against Fascism and the Imperialist Monopoly Capitalists and warmongers, for the mighty Soviet Union and for the great Stalin, the father of all working people.

Next day, when we took little Gerald to the cemetery in Baumschulenweg, there was no parson present. After all, I was a member of the SED, and the Party didn't approve of the clergy. We had been promised, though, that some senior official would come forward and speak a few words at the graveside. So here we stood in the cemetery, my wife, a few friends and neighbours, and a good many members of the school. It was a warm, fine day, and the birds were twittering in the branches. I could not help thinking of some funerals I had attended in my Hitler Youth days. There, too, we did not approve of the clergy: there, too, the Party would send some senior official to speak at the graveside.

The funeral was to be at eleven, and it was now ten past and no official had appeared. So I approached the grave myself and said a few words. I expressed

our hope that our child might find peace, and that God might bless him. What else could I have said? Even those few words were difficult enough.

We went back to Rahnsdorf by train. It was a sad little gathering in the hot, airless coach, none of us saying a word and my wife sobbing quietly.

Two days later, I was asked to appear before a special Party Council. This was for the second time in my life, and it turned out to be much the same procedure as when I was called to account for the Ingeborg affair. The meeting was in the great headquarters building in Behrenstrasse, and I faced six senior officials. I didn't know any of them, and they reproached me bitterly for having left my wife alone on the day after her child's death. At such a time it was my duty to stay with her. I had no business to attend that mass meeting.

I mentioned the strict order given to me by a senior official, but this was brushed aside: "In a difficult situation like this, you should not let yourself be guided by the order of an individual, even a senior official. Don't say it was the Party that ordered you to do such a thing. Inevitably, many orders given by Party officials are nonsensical. It is for each of us to know what the Party really wants, and to *be* the Party at the crucial moment. At that one, Karlheinz, you should have disobeyed the senior comrade's order. You should have told yourself that your first duty was to stay with your wife."

That was what they told me, and I accepted it. There was nothing I could answer and, indeed, I felt that they were quite right. But when I told Lilian about it she just wanted to get away. Away from Rahnsdorf, away from this life, away from everyone and everything.

Five or six years have passed, but I still sometimes ask myself why we didn't really go away then and there. But then, where could we have gone? Only to West Berlin, and I couldn't go there. I couldn't behave like a deserter going over to the enemy. And what

should we have done there, anyway? In those days, it wasn't as if one could view one's life as objectively as, say, a film one happens to see. After all, I myself was one of the crowd acting in that film. I couldn't simply say, "Stop the show, I want to leave the theatre."

I think that much the same applies to millions of others, still on the other side and unable to leave. You can't be "objective" when you happen to be one of the subjects. You have to go on, whether you like it or not; you are just one of myriad little cogs in the wheel, and whether you like it or not, the wheel keeps on turning. And in any case, you may well have forgotten, or indeed you may never have known, that there is a chance of a different sort of life beyond the confines of this huge state machine, of which you happen to form one insignificant part.

## EDITOR'S COMMENTARY (ii)

**T**HAT late summer of 1948 was indeed a period of decision in German affairs. The currency reform, which at all events so far as Western Germany and also West Berlin were concerned, put an almost immediate stop to the economic stagnation and nation-wide starvation of the preceding years, had just been carried through. It also put an end to the nation-wide apathy, and started up an almost feverish activity. For three years the Germans had been exclusively concerned with how, by hook or by crook, they could procure the minimum number of calories to keep body and soul together. It had been a time when money meant practically nothing, and when commodity-goods and food were so scarce that people just bartered the one for the other. Household utensils, furniture and clothing—what little of them people still possessed—had been sold on the black market to provide the marks required to buy a pound or two of potatoes, or a few ounces of butter and coffee. That was the time when the Virginian cigarette of the Occupation Powers provided a sort of basic currency, two or three of the precious weeds being roughly the equivalent of what the ordinary man could earn by an honest day's work.

Now all this was over, and very suddenly, too. In the West the currency reform had the effect of a magician's wand. In a trice, all those precious commodity-goods and foodstuffs were back in the shops at normal prices, and those crowded shop-windows provided an irresistible incentive to work. No one can accuse the Germans of laziness. They have always been gluttons for hard work; and while, during those last few years, the German had been stumbling along like a groggy boxer, now he was rolling up his sleeves and getting down to the job with an almost awe-inspiring gusto.

At the same time currency reform was decreed in the

*East no less than in the West and on rather similar lines (i.e. by a ten per cent cut of the old Reichsmark), but in a different manner and on a different issue of new banknotes.*

*The unforeseen result was that, while the new Western "D-Mark" was, of course, valid in the Western districts of Berlin, the new East German D-Mark was not accepted in the West—not, at any rate, at its face value. With two different currencies in one and the same city, the immediate consequence was the birth of yet another black market. This new one was a sort of semi-legal bank exchange, fixing the relative value of the East-Mark as against the West-Mark. During recent years the rate of exchange has been varying between 3 : 1 and 5 : 1, meaning that you have had to spend from three to five East-Marks in order to buy one West-Mark. It is needless to say that the Eastern authorities have never officially recognised the "semi-official" rate, invariably attributing to the vile machinations and sinister manipulations of Western Monopoly Capitalism what in reality was simply based on the natural laws of supply and demand.*

*In any event, this quarrel was only one of many caused by the innumerable pinpricks of both sides as the Cold War developed. In the late summer of 1948, the new East German Government (The German Democratic Republic) had been formed, as a counterblast to the Bundes-Republik newly established in Bonn ; and the East German rulers, as well as their Russian masters, were making a determined effort to bring the Berlin situation to a head. Until that time the Four-Power Control of Berlin (the Allied Kommandatura) had still been officially functioning, though the meetings of the four Control Commission leaders had become more and more infrequent and had almost invariably resulted in a dispute between East and West. On the German side, there had also still been a joint administration, in which the bickering between the SED and the other parties had become more and more bitter.*

*In their efforts to bring matters to the point of crisis,*



*the Russians and the Eastern Government were making it virtually impossible for the Western Powers to gain access to their sector of Berlin either by road or rail. The Easterners thought that such drastic decrees would be bound to put a stop to the feeding of West Berlin from sources other than the East.*

*It was certainly a ruthless manoeuvre, to be countered only by complete capitulation to the East or by equally ruthless moves; and on the spur of the moment the Western authorities devised the one and only plan which, short of war, could maintain their status in that West Berlin island in the middle of the Soviet Zone of Germany. They organised the "Air Lift"; and when one considers that the whole operation was improvised in a matter of days, it certainly was quite an achievement to provide most of the necessities and some of the luxuries required by over two million people exclusively by air.*

*"Rolls-Royce Delivery to the West's greatest Poor-House" was what a headline in the American press called this remarkable feat of organisation; and it was carried on without a hitch all throughout the winter of 1948-49 and for just about a year, until, indeed, the Eastern authorities relinquished their arbitrary restrictions on road and rail traffic.*

*It was in that mood of the permanent partition of Berlin by twin German governments and the beginning of the "Air Lift" on the part of the Allied authorities that young Schaeffer was given a special assignment which, even now, is not without some interest for any student of history. But he had better tell the story in his own words.*

## VI

ON SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1948, the battle for Berlin was begun. The Communists had promised the people for a long time that if only they could run the show, the Berliners would be much better off. There would be enough potatoes for everybody, and 23 hundredweights of coal for each household.

From nine in the morning demonstrators began to surround the Town Hall in Klosterstrasse.\* "We want coal and potatoes" was one of the slogans carried on their posters and banners, another being "Friedensburg must go."

A steady flow of lorries brought further groups of SED demonstrators from other Eastern districts, and all round the Town Hall the milling people soon grew to a crowd of tens of thousands. Among them were five special squads, handpicked from particularly reliable and particularly tough FDJ boys. I was in command of one of these, another being led by young Misha Benjamin, whose mother, Hilde Benjamin, was soon to earn nation-wide fame as "Red Hilda", Vice-President of the Supreme Court in Eastern Germany.

Every one of our twenty or thirty boys was as deeply convinced of the righteousness of our cause as I was, and the same held good for Misha's squad, and for the others who were joining forces with us

\*What he means is the original Town Hall in East Berlin where, in the first three years, the joint German administration was carried on. A few days later, the West Berlin administration was transferred to a West Berlin suburb and soon carried on independently under Ernst Reuter, who succeeded Dr. Friedensburg, the former mayor mentioned by Schaeffer in in the next paragraph.

in this exciting operation. We were absolutely convinced that a Communist city administration would be able to offer us Berliners a better life and a better future. We had been waiting eagerly for the decisive day, and we felt as happy as any revolutionary on the morning of a successful *putsch*.

It was a close day, that 6th September. There was a slight drizzle and the sky was overcast. At 11.30 sharp—those were our orders—we were to glue our eyes to a certain window on the second floor, where Heinz Kessler was to give us the signal by inconspicuously raising his handkerchief. For Kessler, being a member of the City Parliament, was of course inside the building. There was a violent row going on inside the Chamber, and Kessler was to let us know the precise moment when we could best go into action.

As soon as his handkerchief fluttered, our five squads, posted at various points of the great building, tried to force their way in. Misha Benjamin's boys were the first to manage to scramble over the wrought-iron railings in front of the main gate. The police—most of them East Berliners and under the ideological influence of the SED—pretended to offer resistance since, after all, it was their duty to protect the seat of the joint City Administration. It was a half-hearted effort, though, and once Misha's boys had broken open the gates, my own boys managed to join forces with them, and together we stormed into the Town Hall, and opened more gates for the other three special squads to join us.

We dashed upstairs into the Chamber itself, kicking the shins of as many bourgeois deputies as happened to come within reach of our boots. It is quite possible that, in the heat of the battle, we kicked a number of the wrong shins, but there could be no doubt about the allegiance of the R.I.A.S.\* reporter, who was

\*The letters stand for *Runkfunk im Amerikanischen Sektor*, indicating the American radio station which all these years has been the *bête noir* of the Communists. As for the Allied

operating his microphone throughout all the noise and tumult in the Chamber. One of my boys spotted him, tore the microphone out of his hand and knocked the fellow down. Other boys, meanwhile, took out fuses, smashed bulbs and demolished the telephone switch-board. Others, again, accosted or assaulted the American, British and French liaison officers on duty, and meanwhile we all chanted in chorus a demand that Heinz Kessler should speak. But before he could say anything, one of the Western deputies shouted at him: "Very well, Herr Kessler! Since you are the one who staged this ludicrous farce, we really should like to know what you have to say!"

"Hear, hear!" shouted almost all the other Western deputies, with the unforeseeable result that our leader became completely flustered. Instead of the flaming speech we had expected from him (and which, no doubt, he had meant to deliver), he made a few lame remarks about his disapproval of hooliganism being no less than that of any other Parliamentarian. I, for one, was so furious at Kessler's failure that I ordered my squad away forthwith. But by then the damage was done. Misha, having made the first breach, was the hero of the day. He got a bonus of 500 marks.

So Berlin was split. From now on the West Berlin City Administration had its own headquarters, boycotted by the SED which, naturally, went into business on its own in East Berlin. The first American and British food supplies were dropped at Gatow and Tempelhof. The great air lift had begun.

There could be no mistake about it; it continued day and night both to supply the West Berliners and rile our Eastern authorities. Every day, arriving at Tempelhof Station, I could see the West Berlin women hanging around in groups, many of them carrying

liaison officer mentioned in the next sentence, it should be explained that at that time it was obligatory for one duty-officer of each occupation power to attend every meeting of the Berlin City Administration.

opera glasses. They were looking for the little rubber dolls which were being dropped by some of the supply planes. Whoever delivered one of them to the American authorities was presented with a fat food parcel. That was how the Yanks were trying to bribe our people.

It made me see red. I had been told often enough to hate the Yanks, and now I really did, so that when Hermann Axen, one of the bosses, asked me to work actively against them, I was only too glad to do so. Jochen Weigert and I began to concoct anti-American doggerels, and, I must say they weren't in particularly good taste. Caricatures of the American Commandant in Berlin, General Howley, were also printed and distributed by the thousand, but our main job was to put the notorious "Operation Spit-Bugs" into operation. "Spit-Bugs" were what we called the small, gummed labels on which were slogans such as "Death To All Warmongers." Most of these were directed against West Berlin newspapers alleged to be "warmongering". It was our job to make the Western population aware of this fact.

"Operation Spit-Bugs" began on October 22nd, at 9 a.m., when, at the head of about thirty FDJ boys, I got on the *S-Bahn*\* at Friedrichshagen, which is well within the Eastern Sector. We took a train going west and, while singing anti-war songs at the tops of our voices, were really on the lookout for any passengers reading West Berlin newspapers. As soon as we had spotted one, we would stick one of our little spit-bugs on the paper, and admonish the passenger not to read such warmongering trash. As often as not we would get a punch on the nose for our trouble.

For the next couple of days we were busily engaged on this, continually jumping from one train to another

\**S-Bahn* is the popular abbreviation of *Stadt-Bahn* which, apart from the underground, is the main Berlin means of communication between all sectors. It is important to bear in mind that all stations of the *S-Bahn* system, even those in the Western sectors, come under the jurisdiction of the East German Transport Police.

and annoying the passengers. On the second day, I ran into Captain Szvershinsky, in mufti, on the main platform of the Friedrichstrasse Station. He wanted to know how many Western papers we had dealt with in this way.

On October 24th, it was decided to carry the war into enemy territory, and to extend "Operation Spit-Bugs" to the Western sectors. I had orders from headquarters to assemble my squad of thirty boys at the Ostkreuz Station, well within the Eastern Sector. There I was to meet Detective Inspector Wolkenstein of the Transport Police, who would have ten men available for our protection. And there they were—ten hefty thugs, all of them in black rubber mackintoshes.

I organised my squad into groups of six, each of which was given two policemen for "protection". It was for this purpose that we boys imagined they had come. In actual fact, things turned out rather differently. While it was our job to accost passengers reading Western newspapers, as likely as not the ensuing row would lead to some angry anti-Communist remarks. Then, if the unfortunate passenger happened to get out at an Eastern sector station, he would be followed by one of our "protectors" and arrested on the spot. If, however, he didn't get out before the train reached the Western sector, one of our men would follow him on to the platform and accuse him of pinching his wallet. The passenger's protest would be of little avail, for he would be instantly surrounded by the Eastern Transport policemen who were officially on duty there, and entitled to take their prisoner back to the Eastern sector.

We boys didn't realise at the time that we were being used as pawns in an organised system of kidnapping. We still thought it was right to warn Westerners against the warmongers, and still fondly believed that the black-coated men were there for our protection. Even so, most of us got fed up with this job after a few days, and I myself went to Erich

Honecker to tell him that we would much rather continue our theatrical work.

Honecker agreed, and from then on this special police group, soon to be called the "State Security Service", had to do without us.

On November 1st, 1948, General Kotikov, Supreme Soviet Commander in Berlin, gave a reception to all officials of the FDJ. It was an anniversary celebration of the *Komsomol*, or Soviet Youth Movement.

On the morning of the great day, Heinz Kessler read us a homily on behaviour and table manners, and in honour of the occasion we all decided to wear ties. Each of us was to bring a lady, preferably a wife or, failing that, a secretary or a girl friend. As my wife absolutely refused to come, I took my secretary.

It was quite a party, and it looked as though most of the comrades had some secret store of glad rags in their wardrobes. Some of them looked just like parlour-Bolshies. Jupp Zeese, the shifty-eyed dwarf who had intrigued against me in Kessler's anteroom, brought along a large, empty shopping bag and deposited it in the cloakroom.

The Russian girls looked more attractive than our own. They were well dressed and made-up. Some were students, and most of them spoke perfect German. Their Soviet officer escorts were in full dress, and seemed to be quite at ease. We weren't. We weren't used to slippery parquet floors or to the luxury around us.

"I was myself a child of our proud *Komsomol*," General Kotikov began his speech. He looked most impressive, white-haired and bemedalled. His speech lasted almost two hours, because each sentence had to be translated. I could see Zeese glancing hungrily through the open doors, beyond which the buffets were piled high with all the good things that Mother Russia could offer. At last Kotikov's speech came to an end: "And now, my dear young friends, we must think of the material blessings, too," he concluded

with a smile, and forthwith Zeese, ahead of everyone else, shot into the supper room. I happened to time this by my watch. After exactly four minutes, there wasn't a morsel of caviare or salmon, nor a single cigar, cigarette or candy left on the buffets. But the Russians seemed prepared for this, for supplies were immediately and amply replenished.

The feast went on for two hours. Every three or four minutes a toast was drunk: to Stalin, to Pieck, to the Prime Ministers of each of the satellite states, and then to Stalin again. There was a constant coming and going between the buffet, the cloakroom and the lavatory. As fast as the Russian orderlies appeared with fresh supplies of food and drink, so did the Zeeses of the party cart the stuff off to the cloakroom.

I kept sober enough to feel rather ashamed when I observed the stony expressions of our hosts. And when Zeese, the necks of two wine bottles sticking out of his pocket tottered once again towards the cloakroom, Captain Szvershinsky, resplendent in his full-dress uniform, finally handed him a full food basket with a friendly smile: "*Hier, tovarich, für Frau.*"

Then there was some dancing, but not many of the guests could still stand up on their feet. As for our beautiful Russian hostesses, they kept their distances. Moreover, it was strictly forbidden to ask our hosts political or military questions. The Russian band played waltzes, tangos and a good many *krakoviaks*. Only a few of the junior Russian officers loosened up sufficiently to join us in the popular game of *schinken-klopfen*, which consists in walloping one another's behinds, and then guessing whose wallop it was.

The conversation at this reunion amounted to precisely nothing. Honecker and Kessler stood at the bar drinking and chatting with General Kotikov and his staff, but then they spoke Russian. We ordinary folk simply had no contact with our Russian hosts at all. I did notice, though, that at least ten of the Russian officers and members of the *Komsomol* did not drink a drop all the evening, but just sat there taking



notes. It was quite a remarkable party, all said and done.

When at about 2 a.m. Jupp Zeese, attempting to drink a toast to Stalin, fell off his chair and was sick all over the expensive Persian rug, the friendly General merely smiled and suggested that it was time to go home. As Zeese (his shopping bag full to the brim) and the rest departed with their booty, our hosts remained smiling and bowing politely at the door, taking leave of their guests with perfect correctness.

Many of the guests could later be seen on the station platform, howling drunkenly and embracing their girls, bottles sticking out of their pockets. They were waiting for the first *S-Bahn* trains to take them home, the same trains that brought the first shift of Berliners to work. These workers certainly got an eyeful of how freely the Free German Youth could behave. I wonder if any of them realised that these drunken young hooligans were the same boys who molested passengers for not reading the right kind of newspapers?

A few weeks later, Gerhard Bombal, a lad I had met at the Party school a year or two earlier, came to see me. He was now my successor at Bogensee, and had become a fanatical follower of the Party line. Yet he, too, had been in the Hitler Youth and, as a matter of fact, had been a child star in films glorifying it. Now he was wearing the blue shirt of our new FDJ uniform. It was the first time I had seen it.

"What a pity," I joked, "that my mother has given away my three old brown shirts. I could have had them dyed."

Gerhard gave me a mean look, and all of a sudden seemed in a hurry to leave. Two days later, I was sent for to headquarters, and ticked off properly. I must still be a bit of a Fascist, they told me, if I really thought that all we had to do was to change the colour of our shirts.

A few days later, a Soviet lorry pulled up in front

of our school at Rahnsdorf. We teachers helped to unload large cases containing tommy-guns and ammunition, and were asked to help test these on the nearby parade ground of the Red Army.

Next day there was an FDJ meeting in Berlin. I had my boys singing our usual pacifist songs, but was reproved by Honecker.

"But my dear Erich," I remonstrated, "you yourself taught us at Paetz and Bogensee that it was the supreme duty of the FDJ to agitate against war."

Honecker stared at me loftily and said: "Your education still leaves much to be desired. You should know by now that there are such things as just and unjust war."

Early in 1949, a congress was arranged in Leipzig of all the more prominent writers in Eastern Germany. Johannes R. Becher was there (soon to become Minister of Culture) and, of course, Anna Seghers, Stephan Hermlin, Bodo Use and Professor Friedrich Wolf, the dramatist, who was soon to go to Warsaw as Ambassador of the German Democratic Republic.

Leading officials of the Party as well as of the Free German Youth had been summoned to attend. The object of the congress was to inaugurate a "new line", not, of course, in Party but in cultural affairs. This was to be made more in keeping with the trend of the times, with the age of "activism". Henceforth there was to be no more preoccupation with Western trash aiming only at entertainment. It would now be our duty to popularise the new ideals of the new age, such as productivity, voluntary overtime, and the sacred goal of the quota to be exceeded by any shock worker worthy of the name.

A few days later, all "Cultural Groups" of the Free German Youth were convened in Berlin to discuss the lessons of the Leipzig meeting they had been privileged to attend.

As it happened, we were producing a harmless little comedy, *Grandpa Sold Out*, which had been rehearsed

and was practically ready to be staged. It was decided that we should proceed with it and follow it up immediately with something else more in keeping with the "new line". Evidently it was assumed that the contrast would demonstrate to the rank and file what the new line really meant; and indeed this was to made the subject for a number of discussion groups.

The new production was called *Augen Auf* (Keep Your Eyes Open), and the author was none other than Gerhard Bombal, the chap who had denounced me for my remark about the brown shirts. The heroes of the play were bright FDJ boys and girls, and the villains saboteurs and crypto-Fascists, who were exposed and brought to justice by our youngsters.

Unfortunately, the harmless little comedy about a stupid old grandad was played first, and two thousand boys and girls of the Berlin FDJ roared themselves silly with laughter. They hadn't had such fun for a long time. Honecker took a dim view of all this; it wasn't the effect that had been intended, particularly since, a few days later, the new patriotic piece fell completely flat. Indeed, it caused a great deal of sniggering and at the end there was some booing, too.

There could be no doubt that, so far as our youthful audiences were concerned, public opinion had voted against the "new line". Even so, it was decided to throw the successful little comedy into the ashcan, and take the new piece on tour.

It was a frightful flop. So far as I was concerned, there were only two highlights to the tour: when I happened to run into my old friend Bormann, and had quite a few drinks with him, and, rather more important, when we closed it at Weimar and Professor Otto Lange, head of the famous local Academy of Dramatic Art, came to see the show. He sent for me afterwards and told me that he thought I had some talent, and that I was welcome to start next term at the Academy.

That was the best news I had had for a long time.

I was very keen on our stage work, but felt rather more strongly than the others that what we were doing was hopelessly amateurish, and that I for one badly needed some proper professional training. Now I was apparently to have a real chance at last. However, it wasn't to be. . . .

It wasn't to be because, at that point, the Party began to keep me busier than ever. On February 12th, 1949, I was appointed chairman of the FDJ for the Berlin-Mitte district, one of the most important in the whole movement. At the same time I found myself a member of the District Presidium, chief of the Central Cultural Group and a teacher in the District School. I had two offices, two secretaries and a service car. I certainly had gone up in the world, although from time to time I couldn't help feeling that what I really needed more than anything else was to go to a school myself, and learn something worth while.

I must mention that I had an anteroom in one of my offices—a proper anteroom, with a carpet, two easy chairs and a couple of Picasso reproductions on the walls. There were even window curtains and a telephone that could be, and was, tapped. There sat my chief secretary, Lisak. He was just over forty, and received a salary of 380 marks a month. He was extremely well acquainted with conditions in the district, and had served and survived quite a number of previous district leaders. I didn't know then, but was soon to discover, that he had a more profitable sideline as a professional pimp.

Our Russian chief was Lieutenant-Colonel Shatura, the Soviet Commandant of the district, a man of about forty, well over six feet tall, who wore at all times a very smart and much bemedalled uniform. His office, unlike Szvershinsky's, was exceedingly luxuriously furnished, with Persian rugs, soft arm-chairs and a built-in bar. But here, too, the great Stalin smiled down from the wall, evidently no less

approving of Shatura's luxury as of Szvershinsky's austerity.

Shatura was outspoken in his hatred of the "neo-Fascists Reuter and Co.," and whenever he sent for Lisak and me, he would demand more activity and more and livelier demonstrations.

"Nix marching! Nix singing!" he would shout, hammering his huge fist on the desk. "More fight, more. . . ."

"More *krawall*?" I suggested.

"Bravo, more *krawall*! *Karosh*, more *krawall*!"

He would then offer us vodka and cigarettes, and tell us to get cracking.

Once, as we left the office, Lisak asked me if I would trust him to get things done. Well, why shouldn't I trust him, I thought; after all, he knew the district much better than I did, and had much more experience. A few days later the telephone on my desk rang.

"Comrade Schaeffer?"

"Yes; who is it?"

"Never mind. You'd better come at once to the youth hostel in Dragonerstrasse. The boys and girls are getting an awful beating up there from the local spivs."

I sent out an urgent call to the police, and armed with sticks and truncheons, we followed the police car, with its wailing sirens. As we arrived at the hostel, a Russian jeep stopped on the other side of the street, and out of it stepped Lieutenant Eppstein, Shatura's A.D.C., followed by my own man, Lisak.

What we saw inside was enough to make your blood boil. Seven kids were lying on the floor, bleeding and crying. Poor little Gertrud, aged ten, had her pigtails soaked in blood. We carried her to the ambulance which had just arrived, and then turned on the thugs who were trying to make their get-away. We were wild with rage, and lashed out left and right. About half a dozen of them were caught and taken to the police.

I was present during their first interrogation.

It wasn't a gentle interrogation, and anyone who refused to answer questions got well and truly beaten up. The idea of these scum going for a lot of kids made me see red. They hadn't the guts to attack the likes of us, the Fascist swine!

When one of them had the nerve to grin at me, I bashed in his ugly face.

I called up Walter Bartel, Wilhelm Pieck's private secretary, who was also, incidentally, the Berlin district leader of the V.V.N.\* I had met him first in my early days, before I joined the party, and I continued to see him from time to time. He was flabbergasted when I told him of the disgusting Fascist attack on our youngsters, and insisted that the FDJ must do something about it.

We did, with a vengeance. Next day, FDJ boys and girls from all over Berlin swarmed into my district and filled the streets. The place was completely crammed with blueshirts, and there wasn't a Fascist who dared to show his face.

Our press was full of the news, too, with front-page stories on the contemptible action of hired Fascist *provocateurs* and Western gangsters in assaulting defenceless children. We organised a mass demonstration of 4,000 boys and girls, all of them wearing neat blue FDJ shirts, who marched through the Alexanderplatz, in the heart of Berlin's East End, with me at their head. Poor little Gertrud was carried on a stretcher; it was considered an honour to be chosen as her stretcher-bearers. One of them was Lisak.

A huge crowd gathered on the square, and when our blueshirts were paraded, I made a short speech, solemnly proclaiming that we would now finally root

\*VVN stands for *Verein der Verfolgten des Nazi Regimes*, and the VVN badge (which in the early days entitled the wearer to special rations and other privileges) was given to everybody who had suffered personal hardships or injury at the hands of the Nazis.

out all Fascist swine and *provocateurs*. We'd fight them to the last drop of our blood, if need be.

During the next three days the FDJ received 1,500 new applications for membership. The bosses seemed well pleased. Lieutenant-Colonel Shatura sent for me and gave me some suiting material, 500 marks and a *pajok*, one of the high-grade ones, containing a fair amount of food, cigarettes and liquor. I presented the *pajok* and the money to little Gertrud's parents.

That evening, in a pub in the Rosenthalerplatz, I met Lisak and my other district secretaries for a drink.

"Well, well, well," said Lisak as he downed a glass of schnapps—by no means his first. "It all went like clockwork, didn't it?"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Look at our district leader!" cackled Lisak. "You don't mean to say you didn't know that I hired those ten thugs? Here's the receipt. I bloody well had to give them extra money for the beating up they had to take. Thirty marks each. Total cost to the exchequer, 300 marks."

He showed me a dirty piece of paper signed by all ten hooligans.

There were five of us, apart from Lisak. We rose as one and dragged him into the toilet. There I knocked the stuffing out of him. It did me good.

The final pay-off was that I was given three days solitary confinement for "my indiscreet behaviour", and the man who sentenced me was Lieutenant-Colonel Shatura. In the meantime his aide, Lieutenant Eppstein, had the ten thugs arrested in case they should blab.

During those days I had plenty of time to think. I was well looked after, given plenty of blankets, plenty of food and even a clean cell. Naturally enough, the subject of my thoughts was whether I should stay in or get out of my present way of life.

What made me finally decide to stay was chiefly that I just couldn't imagine myself beating it to the West. The West still stank so far as I was concerned.

I had no place there, and still had no intention of deserting my cause.

My cause. But wasn't it a bit sullied for me by this disgusting affair? I thought and thought, and in the end decided that it wasn't. After all, a lickspittle little swine like Lisak wasn't really representative of the Party. The Party stood for bigger things. My thoughts returned to what Peter Heilmann and other decent fellows had taught me. Never forget the greatness of the cause, they had said, no matter how mean and petty some of its adherents may be. A fine tapestry, is no less fine because a few lice have crawled across it. You just squash the lice to help preserve it, that's all.

As for that particular louse, Lisak, and my own job as district leader, I needn't give either of them another thought. Next week I was due at the Weimar Academy of Dramatic Art to take my examination. I would soon see now whether I could really be an actor, as I so dearly wanted. If I could, I should at last have a man-sized job ahead of me.

I went to Weimar and was duly examined by Professors Achenbach, Valentin and Lange. I passed my entrance examination with honours, and was awarded the Hans Otto Scholarship, which meant that from the beginning of next term I could live there and begin to learn the one job I really wanted to do.

But things didn't work out that way. I had to miss my first term at the Academy because the Party had other ideas for me. This happened as a direct result of my trip to Weimar.

The Academy term had not yet started, for it was still the height of the holiday season. On August 28th, Goethe's birthday and, in addition, the bicentenary of his birth, there was a tremendous to-do. Practically all the members of the Government and the more distinguished writers and artists of East Germany had come to Weimar to do homage to his memory. So, too, had some of the more important officers of the FDJ.



It was a pity that the speech made by our own chief, Erich Honecker, was so far removed from the spirit of Goethe, so riddled with Party clichés and slogans, and, above all, so damnably long. Most of the important guests in the front stalls, and in what used to be the Royal box of the famous Weimar theatre, were half asleep by the time it ended, though not Johannes R. Becher, President of the "Cultural League for the Democratic Rebirth of Germany", future Minister of Education and Culture and, over and above all that, East Germany's most famous poet, and author of the new National Anthem. Becher, sitting in the front row of the stalls, was visibly annoyed, staring daggers at the speaker and clearing his throat repeatedly. At last Comrade Honecker took the hint and brought his speech to a somewhat abrupt conclusion. As he stepped down from the stage, the rest of the audience woke up again and applauded.

This rotten rehash of slogans was apparently the best that the leader of the Free German Youth could do to honour the memory of Goethe. I couldn't help feeling ashamed. I hadn't had a chance to finish my own schooling because I had to join the SS and go to war; and later I hadn't had a further chance to continue my studies for the very same reason that I had been in the SS. So I couldn't be expected to know much about Goethe, or to understand all the arguments put forth on his connection with the French Revolution. Even so, when I entered the celebrated theatre my heart seemed to beat faster. What a wonderful place it was! So many famous people must have sat in these same seats, and so many famous lines must have been first spoken from this stage.

Our FDJ delegation from Berlin consisted of thirty picked members. "Blueshirts to be worn, white shirt to be brought along" was one of our orders. So here I was in my elegant stall, suffering from a bit of a hangover—for we had even started boozing in the car that brought us from Berlin.



was we of the FDJ who provided the trumpeters and drummers.

*Tasso* was a bit of a flop. It seemed impossible to keep the audience quiet and to stop it from consuming sandwiches and sweets. During the first interval the manager had to appear before the curtain to beg us to be a little less noisy. He was booed off. Not only was *Tasso* rather above the heads of this audience, but the standard of the discussion was also abominably low. In fact, one party hack, claiming to be a teacher from Bad Elster, announced, in so many words, that those responsible for the choice of the play should be severely reprimanded, for it was not only decadent but also reactionary and thoroughly bourgeois. The next speaker was a Russian. He was only nineteen and a member of the *Komsomol*, or Russian Youth Movement. He introduced himself in halting German, and then stood quietly on the stage, waiting patiently for his unruly audience to calm down and give him a hearing.

"I merely want to say thank you," he announced finally, tears in his eyes. "It was a great and wonderful performance. We envy German Youth its Goethe. We *Komsomol* boys and girls are happy to be here, and *Tasso* has been an unforgettable experience for us."

The Weimar festivities were to culminate in a torch-light procession to lay wreaths on Goethe's tomb. I had quite a row with the other Berlin comrades about the inscription on the ribbon of our wreath. "Mehr Licht"\* was my suggestion.

"They won't like that," said another comrade, "and we will be ticked off. After all, we're supposed to have enough light as it is, aren't we? They might think we were Trotskyites."

So we finally agree on the rather pompous: "Berlin's FDJ will always be the hammer, never the anvil."

\*This means "more light", and is supposed to have been the last words spoken by Goethe on his deathbed.

Before the torchlight procession started, Otto Grotewohl, the Prime Minister, was to address us, and for well over an hour we practised the chorus: "We greet the friend of our youth, Otto Grotewohl." When he finally appeared with Walter Ulbricht, we cheered like mad, and Grotewohl turned round, beaming and shouting back: "Long live the great Stalin!"

Then he addressed us, and as he is in the habit of making long speeches, it was for a full couple of hours. His argument was that bourgeois decadence has so far prevented us from grasping fully the greatness of Goethe. It was only now, in our own Socialist state, that we could manage to do this.

It was a long, long speech. As I tried to follow his arguments, I couldn't help wondering whether he really believed what he was saying. As for bourgeois decadence, did it not occur to him that we were also surrounded here by a good deal of decadence that was definitely proletarian?

It gave me quite a shock to catch myself thinking on these lines. Wasn't this the first step towards opposition, provocation and sabotage? Wasn't I really beginning to doubt the words of our own Prime Minister, whom I admired so much?

But there wasn't time to speculate, for just then the torchlight procession started, and off we went through the streets of Weimar. We were marching in honour of Johann Wolfgang Goethe, and one of the songs we sang was:

*Ein jeder Propeller singt surrend Rot-Front,  
Wir schützen die Sowjet Union.*

The procession finally came to a halt in the large square in front of the theatre, where we all hurled our torches on to a great bonfire. This was supposed to be the climax of the affair, but just at that moment, somewhere on the outskirts of the town, persons unknown took it upon themselves to let off some fireworks, which were cleverly contrived to make the sparks fly in every sense of the word. For what happened was that, out of a white rocket, there

suddenly appeared in the sky a large, fiery "F".\* Everyone in Weimar saw it. Everyone had to see it. The crowd suddenly became restive, and in less than a minute we began to hear the sirens of the German, as well as Russian, police cars.

The atmosphere became more and more tense. There could be no doubt now that there were many here, particularly among the people of Weimar, who sympathised with the demonstration. From an open window I heard an excited voice shout: "Goethe was a human being, and what are you?" There could be no doubt, either, of the feelings of many of the university students present, for they closed their ranks and took up a defensive attitude. Meanwhile, from the balcony of the theatre, an Academy student was reciting at the top of his voice a piece out of Goethe's *Faust*, which was followed by fanfares and rolls of drums, according to the original schedule.

Then—and this wasn't part of the official programme, either—a party official, in spite of the obviously hostile attitude of at least a part of the crowd and the frequent cries of "Shame!", "Shut up!" and so on, climbed on to the pedestal of the Goethe-Schiller monument and shouted: "Let us all think of the victims of Fascism."

What now happened was even less in keeping with the official programme, for after a moment's complete silence we could all hear, loud and clear, the voice of a man, crying: "And let us also think of the men and women who are shut up right now in the concentration camp less than ten miles away."

For a moment there was a deathly silence. Then pandemonium broke loose. The man, visible to all, was immediately grabbed; he had not made the slightest effort to get away. I could see his face clearly in the light of the bonfire—a fine, frank face. He must

\*The "F" stood for *Freiheit* (Freedom). Scribbled on walls and in many other places it had been used for many years as the emblem of opposition within Eastern Germany.

have been about fifty, tall and well built. As he was being pushed into a police car, a group of students started a scuffle with the police and formed themselves in front of him like a bodyguard. I was close to him now, and I could see and hear him clearly as he shouted: "Thanks, friends, but I'll gladly go back where I've already been for nine years."

Then he plucked the VVN badge from his coat and threw it into the flames. He entered the police car of his own accord.

It took a long time for the crowd to disperse, still demonstrating excitedly for one side or the other. An hour later, it was decided that we Berliners should be sent home that same night. Some of the more unruly students happened to belong to our group, and apparently the authorities feared trouble. Just before we left, I heard that Jochen Weigert had gone to Grotewohl and the other bigshots, and had tried his damndest to get the arrested man released on account of his anti-Fascist past. The story went that after a while they told Jochen that he would be arrested too unless he stopped making such a damned fuss about nothing.

## EDITOR'S COMMENTARY (iii)

**I** MAY well be asked at this point why Schaeffer, so frequently disillusioned, did not break with the regime before he was finally forced to do so.

There are various answers to this question, one of which will be given soon in his own words when he resumes his narrative. But before letting him do so, it may be useful, and indeed necessary, to elucidate some of his previous and subsequent references to the curiously strong hold of the Communist Party's educational system on the minds of young people—particularly those who are impressionable, sensitive, unstable and thereby predestined for the rank and file; or equally those who represent the more active and aggressive type of intellectuals who consider themselves cut out for leadership. Between this system and its pupils the spiritual relationship is very much that of the father confessor to the penitent, and it is indeed not at all surprising that once devout Communists, who have finally managed to make the break with the Party, often seek, and find, solace in the spiritual support of the Catholic Church. This also tends to make the behaviour of Communist traitors in political show trials less inexplicable.

Within the educational system of the Party, and in particular within the *Freie Deutsche Jugend*, there is a precise equivalent to the confessional. It is called the *Ich-Buch*; and though a fleeting mention of it has been made previously in these pages, we have now reached a point at which we should know a great deal more about it. Indeed, we cannot otherwise begin to understand the story of young Schaeffer, and the very much vaster story of which it happens to form a small, if significant, facet. The fact that he collected a number of these *Ich-Bücher*, and published one or two of them, adds considerable substance to his own recollections and observations.

*I have seen the originals of a good many of these documents; they are usually in the form of ordinary school exercise-books, and their titlepages bear the one word Ich. Almost every day the young owner is supposed to set down every point that worries, puzzles, or elates him in his attitude to the Party and its teachings. One might call them a form of intimate spiritual diary, though they are, in fact, much more in the nature of a political confessional.*

*Here, then, are some excerpts from an Ich-Buch kept by a girl in her early twenties during one of the educational courses she attended. It was also a course on which young Schaeffer happened to work as a teacher, though the head teacher in that instance was a young man called Hans, to whom reference is frequently made. The girl, as will be seen, had a "bourgeois" family background, and the Rolf she mentions from time to time is the man to whom she was engaged with the consent of her parents. The Ich-Buch as usual begins with a brief autobiographical note:—*

*I was born on August 7th, 1928, a daughter of Dr. Werner Schrader, a grammar-school master, and his wife, née Wellmann. From my children's school (22. Volksschule) I went to the Luise-Henriette Oberschule für Mädchen (a high school for girls). I left the school in 1944. . . .*

*As regards my life so far, I have to admit self-critically that my parents brought me up in a strictly bourgeois fashion, thereby subjecting me to the influences of Fascist ideology. I now realise that for that I cannot but condemn them; wittingly or unwittingly they belonged to the grave-diggers of humanity. . . .*

*I was rather over-sexed at an early age and, feeling that to be wrong, I had all sorts of bourgeois notions of false shame about it.*

14th MARCH, 1950

*I was terribly impressed by to-day's lesson on Communist education. Somehow I feel that I'm really not*



worthy of being at this school, benefitting from the pence of the workers. . . .

I continually catch myself thinking that what really is the matter with me is my growing sense of fear. And then, why should I be having to give an account of myself all the time? After all, it's my own life, isn't it? Some of the comrades here find so much to write about themselves that there's hardly an end to it. Hans tells me I should never forget what Kalinin said in his book: that Communist principles are quite simply the principles of any educated, honest, and progressive person who loves his Socialist homeland—the principles of friendship, comradeship, humanity, honesty, and eagerness for work.

Now all this appeals to me very much, but on the other hand I can't help feeling that much the same noble qualities have been held up to admiration at all times and in every land. And then, surely, even in the Soviet Union, there must be people who are lacking in these qualities, even among the Party Leaders? After all, they are human, and one can never rid oneself of human weakness.

What puzzles me is why we are constantly being told that we Germans in particular must strive to attain these noble qualities on account of the crimes committed by the Nazis. It is quite true that foul crimes were committed by some Germans, but honestly I can't feel responsible for them myself and, after all, even at the time of those terrible gas-chambers, there were plenty of decent, and even very decent Germans, weren't there? And not all of them Communists, either. In our lectures we are constantly told to think and act patriotically, but all the examples of great virtue given us seem to come from the USSR.

One thing I don't like about this school is that we are always being asked to talk about our most private and secret affairs. Personally, I think everybody should mind his or her own business. Of course, I am devoted to the Party and eager to learn; and of course, that's what I'm here for. But what has all that got to do with my sex life? Maybe I'm not yet progressive enough to

*understand everything I am supposed to know here at school; but I certainly don't want to give up my private life and thoughts, and as for my parents—well, after all, they are my parents, aren't they?*

16th MARCH, 1950

*Yesterday, while the others were playing ball or hanging around, I went for a walk, and at the river ferry I met Hans. I had a good mind to turn back again. Frankly, I am a bit fed up with the whole business, and don't like being kept under control, and having constantly to watch out not to say or do the wrong thing. After supper, during our usual discussion, some of the comrades said that my collectivist attitude left much to be desired. Gerda remarked I was far too egocentric, and thereby harmful to the Party. But I'm not so sure, and I'm suddenly beginning to feel lonely. Perhaps the others are right and I really am a bad comrade. Probably what's wrong with me is that I am so scared of criticism. I hate being nagged at all the time. Maybe I'm also suffering from an inferiority complex. I wonder? But then, must there be a social cause for everything? I will ask Hans about it!*

17th MARCH, 1950

*To-day I suddenly realised quite clearly that the resistance and defences I have been putting up are really a sign of weakness. It is just an example of trying to hide behind corrupt concepts of bourgeois morality. In this morning's lecture on Fascism, I began to understand how that was exactly what had enabled the Fascists to come into power. It seems horrible now to think of the dastardly crimes they sanctioned. I could cry when I think of what the poor people of the Soviet Union were made to suffer in their name. And yet, they don't hate us. On the contrary, they are helping us, they are our true friends. To-day I realised quite clearly that I must devote all my strength to the Party so as to do my share in the struggle for peace and progress. Never, never again must there be a repetition of these crimes.*

*As for the Americans, they should be jolly well ashamed*

*of themselves for going on supporting the same old Fascist cliques in Germany. They should know that nearly all of us still carry some traces of that foul ideology in our subconscious minds. I am really beginning to understand now why it is so vitally important for us here at school to criticise each other and, above all, ourselves as severely as we possibly can.*

*19th MARCH, 1950*

*Yesterday I wasn't at all attentive in class. I could not help thinking of Rolf. What will he do when I tell him finally that he must decide to join the FDJ? After all, I can't be expected to carry on an affair with a fellow once I know that politically he is a crass opportunist. Even in one's love affairs one must learn to think in terms of class struggle, lest one's emotional life tends to encumber one's political development. If we humans wish to dominate matter one day we will have to train our will power for the task, and now I realise at last that there is something far greater than one's personal life. There is the life of the community of which one forms a part.*

*Hans noticed my absent-mindedness, and after class I had an hour with him alone. He believes I should break with Rolf, but my parents think otherwise. I feel that he was quite right when he said that my parents will die anyway before long, that then I will have to make my own way, and that the sooner I start, the better. It is only by cutting away from my mother's apron strings that I can grow freely into an independent member of the new social order. If I wait, it may be rather more difficult, since by then the negative and retarding influence of my parents will have gained a much stronger hold over me.*

*Hans said that we all of us have a great deal more to learn, since only educated people can be truly free, whereas ignorant people will remain forever slaves. I think he is the one person who really understands me. Everything he says is so deeply considered. I wish I could grow up to be like him. When I tried to thank*

him he said: "Don't thank me, thank the Party, for it is the Party to which I owe everything I am." I think it is this sort of modesty that I lack most of all. I always want to be in the centre of things, and even when I go out quite alone, as I sometimes do, it is only out of perverseness and to attract attention.

21st MARCH, 1950

Ever since I began to understand how vital criticism and self-criticism are to a really progressive person, my work has improved and there is more zest in it. I have written Rolf a long letter, telling him that he must come to a decision. Now I feel much calmer and more rested. I shudder to think how empty my life used to be. Of course, I realise that I have a long way still to go. I must work a great deal harder and improve myself a great deal more, both personally and politically, so as to become a really worthy member of the Party. One must be capable of real enthusiasm, so that, with the help of constant criticism and study, one can develop one's social consciousness. Undying hatred for all the foes of Socialism and undying love for my fellow human beings, that must be the watch-word. Of one thing, anyway, I am now quite sure: without the Party I am lost. I will do absolutely anything to serve the Party. The Party is all that matters to me.

22nd MARCH, 1950

To-morrow is the day for criticism and self-criticism in open class. I will have to prepare for it, for, in spite of serious reprimands, I haven't yet quite succeeded in regulating my way of conscious thinking in terms of the class struggle. Egocentric thoughts about my emotional life still far too often get the upper hand, and I find myself letting my attention wander from the class to my private affairs, thereby working against the interests of the Party. I realise that my inner relationship to the community is not yet quite what it ought to be, and this undoubtedly indicates a lack of social conscience.

I hope that to-morrow's criticism will help me to

*overcome these failings, and I conclude this day by voicing my utmost confidence in the Party. I am no longer afraid. I ask for criticism because this is essential to someone endeavouring to think on Marxist lines.*

*23rd MARCH, 1950*

*Is there any point in writing this? Or even in staying on here at all? I couldn't sleep a wink all night. Hans wouldn't let me speak to him. Many of us are hanging our heads. And what now? I see, of course, that criticism must be severe, since otherwise it would be easy for the agents of Imperialism and Monopoly Capitalism to sneak into the Party and corrupt it with their deceitful and dangerous ideologies. I understand that the chief aim is for the Party to be kept clean. But why don't they give us another chance to pass our test? I do want to prove that I'm willing to learn from my mistakes. It was amazing to hear even our own teachers publicly criticising one another quite ruthlessly. I had to admire their courage, and their deep social consciousness in submitting to it.*

*As for myself, I am at my wits' end. I am so deeply ashamed at having let the Party down. Right now I feel quite unable to cope any more. If only I didn't have bourgeois parents, and had been brought up differently, I might have progressed much further by now.*

*Under the date of March 25th there is this entry in the girl's Ich-Buch by her mentor Hans Fenske; a most remarkable one, the effect of which can be noticed in her own jubilant entry the day after.*

*Why are you so upset, Ursel? After all, your progress so far and your general attitude seem to have proved to us that, at any rate, you are beginning to make headway.*

*If the Party is very strict in urging you on to more and more severe self-criticism, it is merely done, my dear Ursel, to help you in your own development, which must involve a complete change in your personality. For it is only by changing yourself that you can contribute*

towards changing society. That's where you need the Party's helping hand.

Who, then, is the Party? We all are. You, and I, and the friends and comrades all over the world: and it is for that very reason, Ursel, that the Party as a whole must needs be infallible. It is only one of many other reasons, of course, another being that all our thinking is based on the infallible science of the materialist concept of history and the dialectical methods . . . hence the only thing that matters is to keep the Party in power, and that again demands unconditional confidence and obedience on the part of every comrade.

Most of all we can learn from the great and wise Comrade Stalin, whose very life proves the truth of our faith. This is one more reason for us to be quite sure that our peaceful progress can be guaranteed only by constant friendship with the great Soviet Union and with the Bolshevik party. . . .

Compared with such great issues, my dear Ursel, can't you see the utter unimportance of petty bourgeois habits and equally petty personal relationships? I am sure you can and that's why you must get completely rid of your old Ich and try to become a new person. Many of us are still encumbered by some of the dross of a bourgeois upbringing, and for those of us, thus handicapped, nothing is more vital than severe self-criticism as well as mutual criticism and, above all, the help of the Party. It is only thus that we can develop the proper Social conscience.

Why do you bother about that fellow Rolf? You should make him face the issue clearly and come to a decision. If he can't or won't, you would do well to get rid of him, for it would mean your being even more closely tied to the Party. You must try to get over the reactionary influence of your parents, and to win them to our cause. Should that prove to be impossible, you should make a clean break with them. Never forget one of the basic demands of Marxism: Anything that bars the way to progress must be brushed aside.

It so happens I was married for two years, and my

*wife and I understood one another perfectly. But one day she failed to appreciate a change in Party politics that happened to be necessary. I tried very hard to make her understand this change, but when I saw that she just couldn't follow the new Party line, I naturally divorced her. I have never regretted it, nor has it made me lonely, for it has tied me all the closer to the Party.*

*Personally, I have no doubt that you will succeed. At the beginning of my own development I was no less helpless than you are now. Remember that the only thing that matters is your learning to love the Party, and remember, too, that if ever you should loose the Party you would have lost everything that makes life worth living for you.*

*Think this over very carefully, and then we'll have another talk.*

*Hans.*

*26th MARCH, 1950*

*I could sing for joy! Yes, this is typical of the Party—always there in the nick of time. The Party knows unfailingly when to take a hand and how to help. That letter Hans wrote to me on its behalf was so thoughtful. I have read it over and over again, and I've been thinking about it deeply. Yes, now I realise why they were so strict with us at the beginning. It was the testing time, to make sure that we were worthy of being educated by the Party. As for myself, I can only say that I want to prove my worth for ever and ever and ever.*

*27th MARCH, 1950*

*Hans let me come to see him. He gave me nearly four hours of his precious time, and for all of it we talked about me. I know now that I'm on the way up. I think that I am much fonder of Hans than I ought to be, but, after all, there is nothing to be ashamed of in that, is there? We are in the same camp, aren't we?*

*Hans said I need not write him any more letters. I must now try to control my Ich publicly in open class and thereby help everybody to make some progress collectively.*

*How very right he is! After all, anyone who seeks to keep anything secret from his comrades cannot avoid being an enemy by his neglect of collectivism. The Party must know everything about everybody, and to achieve this end every means is justified.*

*8th APRIL, 1950*

*I'm itching to get back to Berlin. I do see now that the first necessity is to defend our Socialist achievements. Therefore, I have decided to join the People's Police. I am going to enroll to-morrow for preliminary training. Yesterday Anne-Marie said that I'm sometimes a bit hysterical and altogether too highly-strung. Come to think of it, that was really a remark harmful to the interest of the Party. I am going to report it.*

*10th APRIL, 1950*

*To-day Anne-Marie was put properly on the carpet. In open class, too. I was quite right about her. There was much in her subconscious mind that she had been trying to hush up. The fact that even now, at twenty-seven, she doesn't quite appreciate the shame of having once been a leader of the Hitler Youth movement, shows her Fascist leanings. Moreover, her home is in the West End of Berlin, where the influence of the Monopoly Capitalists and Imperialists is particularly strong. Perhaps she was infiltrated as a spy. We couldn't prove it, but anyway, she has been expelled and sent home because of her dishonest and unethical attitude. At the close of the meeting the head of the school singled me out for public praise. He said: "Ursula has proved to us all that she has grasped the meaning of proletarian vigilance." I wonder if Hans, too, is proud of me?*

*18th APRIL, 1950*

*The course is ending to-morrow. During the last week I was privileged to work as assistant to the leader of one of the study groups. The head has decided that I am to stay on for another course in that capacity. I am very happy, and will be ever grateful to the Party for*



*having put me on the road to real progress. From now on all my life, all my strength belongs to the Party.*

*Long live the Party! Long live Comrade Stalin!\**

*Anyone who has any acquaintance with Communist terminology and with the special type of jargon favoured by the Communist educationalists, must have noticed their rapid influence on Ursula's literary style. Hers would seem to have been a fairly significant case; and here, to follow it, is another no less significant, which was set down by Schaeffer. It concerns a man named Herbert Schulz, aged twenty-six, who attended one of the courses of indoctrination at Rahnsdorf, where Schaeffer himself was a master.*

*Schulz was a manual worker and a married man, but since he was employed as a full-time secretary in one of the FDJ district offices, he was no longer able to live with his wife, at any rate for the time being. She had a job in Berlin, for it was considered impossible to arrange married quarters for minor staff members in the district office where he was employed.*

*In these circumstances, it would seem understandable that Schulz should be constantly worried, and that whenever he could obtain leave he should dash off to see his wife. It would seem equally understandable that at the Rahnsdorf course his attentiveness in class left much to be desired. He was duly hauled over the coals. One of the points in the official indictment read:--*

*Schulz is squandering the pence of the workers and the funds of the Party, forgetful of the fact that his expenses for the privilege of being sent to this school are being paid for by the working population as well as by the Party.*

*In his capacity as a teacher, Schaeffer was present at*

*\*Schaeffer reports that Ursel Schrader soon graduated to a pretty high rank (Oberkommissarin) in the State Security Service. Little over a year after the last entry in her *Ich-Buch*, i.e. in June, 1951, she denounced her father, Dr. Werner Schrader, for "disseminating subversive rumours". He was given three and a half years in gaol.—Editor.*

*the staff meeting which decided to "give Schulz the works". For a week or so after, the unfortunate man was systematically subjected to interminable homilies on the duties of a citizen in the Socialist state. Finally, he appeared in the office of the head and, showed him the latest entry in his Ich-Buch.*

*I am an opportunist. I have tried to deceive the Party. I am a bad comrade and I am ashamed of myself, being unworthy of Party membership.*

*The head was very friendly, and sent Schulz back to his room, telling him that it wasn't for the Party to interfere in what had to be his own decision. He would have to discover how to square matters with his own conscience. As for the Party, it would regret losing a good comrade, but it would never try to exercise undue influence on his personal decisions.*

*Having thus been "killed by kindness", Schulz was at his wits' end. He spent a sleepless night, and next morning announced his desire for public "self-criticism". Then, in open class, he confessed his sinful thoughts, such as his idea of playing truant and running off home to his wife.*

*After that, he became a fanatic, studying Marxist philosophy day and night so as to prove his worth to his teachers and comrades. At the end of the course, he decided to get a divorce, having become convinced that it was really his wife's "petty-bourgeois" influence that had brought him so near to becoming a hopeless deviationist.*

*The case of Herbert Schulz seems to have excited Schaeffer all the more because Frau Schulz was going to have a baby, and, being a happy young father himself, he could appreciate the conflict of loyalties disturbing the mind of his comrade.*

*He will now go on to explain why, in spite of many setbacks and disappointments, the Party continues to exercise its immense hold on the minds of the young.*



The Author's Acting Group in *The Sailors of Catarró*, by Wolfgang Schaeffer second from right.



In *Deep Roots*, by Howard Fast, Schaeffer is made up as a negro.

should take note of it. In fact, they should be reminded that they are talking complete nonsense, for if they think that young people dislike trumpets, drums and fanfares, they are jolly well mistaken. It was these, together with uniforms and torchlight parades, that drove me and millions of other youngsters into paroxysms of enthusiasm for the Hitler Youth, and it was these that first aroused our enthusiasm for the FDJ, and still, even now, whip up "Young Pioneers" and the older FDJ boys and girls to the same frenzy. It is a frenzy which many of my own generation have come to know twice.

Who can blame these youngsters? What boy of fifteen would not respond to being allowed to carry a rifle or a flag? And when he reads the slogan on the flag: "For a peaceful, strong, and healthy Germany!", and when his elders then tell him that, if need be, he must use that rifle to defend the freedom of his homeland, his enthusiasm knows no limit.

What I really mean to say is that, apart from its faults, the FDJ is still a very great community of young people, and that the hundreds of thousands who march behind its flag are certainly not to be compared with the members of a chain gang. There isn't space here to describe the magnificent spirit of its well-organised international meetings, at which boys and girls from a score of countries crowd round the camp fires and sing their songs. I can't describe, either, its stirring parades, lovely torchlight processions and heart-warming leisure hours at the end of a great day.

All this impressive "front" can be studied in picture papers and propaganda literature, and very nice it looks, too. What *I* have to describe is what happens behind that front.

The *Woche der Weltjugend* was quite an event for us. True, not the entire "World Youth" was represented in East Berlin in that spring of 1949; most of the big delegations had come from the satellite states and the

Far East. But there was a fair sprinkling from the Western countries as well, and we of the FDJ were honoured to play hosts to youth delegations from more than a score of foreign countries.

Pride of place, of course belonged to the numerous representatives of the *Komsomol*, and the climax of a whole week of parties, parades and other festivities was a gala staged in the Opera House, attended by the leaders of the Government, the Party and all the swells.

It was my duty to direct the chorus of the FDJ, complete with trumpets, fanfares and paraphernalia of slogans in praise of the USSR in general and the *Komsomol* in particular. I confess that I thoroughly enjoyed all this, particularly as I have never been able to resist the electrifying atmosphere "back-stage" when a big show is in progress.

When the curtain fell on one of our choruses, I was busy on the stage arranging the chairs for a Russian balalaika orchestra which was the next item on the programme and was to be introduced by some prominent *Komsomol* leader. However, just before the curtain went up, Gerhard Bombal appeared—more brilliantined than ever—and pressed a piece of paper into my hand.

"Here is the text of the *Komsomol* speech," he said. "You must read it; there isn't another interpreter here."

Before I could even look at the paper, Bombal vanished, and, as the curtain rose to the usual tremendous applause, a young *Komsomol* officer appeared. He looked very smart in his well-tailored uniform. He had a fine face and a shock of hair which he flung from his brow with an elegant shake of his head, as he delivered the first lines of his speech with all the eloquence and assurance of a trained orator.

As I stood beside him, I unfolded the paper Bombal had handed me, and got the shock of my life. It was not a translation as I had expected, but the original Russian text. What on earth was I to do? I couldn't

read cyrillic letters, let alone translate them. As I stood there, the sweat beading my forehead, I could see my boss, Colonel Shatura sitting in the front row next to General Tulpanov, the famous "cultural" head of the Soviet administration. Behind them, I could also see Szvershinsky and Svotkin sitting beside Honecker and Kessler. In the old royal box were Grotewohl, Ulbricht and several Russian generals, while all over the theatre I could see the blue banners and blue shirts of a thousand FDJ boys and girls. It was like looking across a vast field of cornflowers waving in the wind. By now I was beginning to feel dizzy into the bargain, for the *Komsomol* officer, ending his speech, gave me a friendly nod, indicating that I should begin to read my translation. I took a deep breath and shut my eyes.

"Our Soviet friend and comrade is happy to be with us on this great occasion", I began, pretending to read from the paper in my hand. "He feels honoured and proud to bring us the brotherly greetings of all his comrades in the great *Komsomol*, and in doing this his thoughts turn to the leader and friend of the youth of all the world—Comrade Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin . . . !"

I felt my shirt sticking to my sweating body as I watched the Russians in the front row staring at me in astonishment. Most of them, I knew, could understand German. One major gaped at me, his mouth wide open.

What had that *Komsomol* officer with the lock of hair really said? Fortunately, I had little time for speculation, for, as usual when Stalin's name was mentioned, all the FDJ boys and girls jumped to their feet and started clapping like mad things. Still, I could see Heinz Kessler glaring daggers at me and whispering angrily to Honecker. He, too, I reflected, also understood Russian.

Quite suddenly, an elderly Russian colonel, sitting in the front row, got up and shouted some remark to the speaker, who gave me a puzzled glance and

hurriedly left the stage. Almost immediately, the balalaika orchestra made its entrance, so that the incident was scarcely noticeable. But even so, backstage I received a dressing-down from some of the leading SED officials, while Bombal stood sneering in the background.

However, the show had to go on. The next item on the programme was a Russian soprano. She was the size of a house; I honestly don't think I have ever seen such an immense creature. But she had a kind face and smiled at me sweetly as I adjusted the microphone for her. As the curtain was still down, I decided to fetch her a chair. But as I ran to the wings, I had no idea that a young *Komsomol* was doing precisely the same thing on the other side of the stage. By bad luck, the curtain rose just as we both approached her with our chairs, and the audience, thinking that both chairs were needed to support her, roared their delight. The situation was so utterly ridiculous that I, too, burst out laughing as I dashed off the stage with my chair.

Although the incident was quickly over, and the whole show seemed to have been a success, I was duly apprehensive when I was sent for the following day to appear before the Central Committee.

"You deliberately sabotaged the political character of the event by trying to burlesque it," I was told.

I tried to explain that, since I didn't understand Russian, there was nothing I could do with the Russian text handed me at the last moment.

"Who gave it to you?" someone asked.

"Comrade Bombal," I answered.

They then apologised to me, and sent for Bombal and read him the riot act he so thoroughly deserved. Until that moment, we had merely disliked one another; after it, we became deadly enemies.

As for the Russians, they proved once again that they had a sense of humour. Captain Szvershinsky roared with delight and gave me a cigarette, while Colonel Shatura laughed loudly, saying that it was

high time that I learnt Russian, and ordered his aide, Lieutenant Eppstein, to teach me. Thereafter, Eppstein gave me Russian lessons twice a week, but as he always brought a bottle of vodka with him, I'm afraid my tuition, while highly entertaining, wasn't very successful.

One day, when he came to give me a lesson, Eppstein told me that Captain Szvershinsky had been taken to Moscow, and that rumour had it that he was either in gaol or on his way to a labour camp. It was said that the NKVD was supposed to have found out that he was a member of a deviationist group.

I spent my three weeks holiday in West Berlin, where we were still living in Lilian's little flat in the Kurfürstenstrasse. But we had no money except the very small sums we could afford to change at the rate of four or five East marks to one West mark. The "par" exchange, officially granted in certain circumstances, did not apply to members of the SED who were paid their salaries in East marks. Because of this state of affairs, we hadn't paid any rent for six months, and the landlord threatened to evict us. But my wife went to see the district mayor and managed to get permission for us to change eighty East marks at "par". So we had just enough money to pay the arrears of our rent.

But we didn't pay them. We wanted our small share of the good things the capitalist West had to offer. We bought luscious pork chops, oranges, marzipan and pineapples, and, with what remained, a pair of those imported shoes with inch-thick crepe rubber soles.

Nevertheless, I was determined not to be impressed by what I told myself was just Western ballyhoo, and refused to be hoodwinked by the display of luxury in West Berlin. For, I told myself, one thing was all too evident : an incompetent West Berlin City Council was doing nothing for all those wretched youngsters gazing at the wonderful yet unattainable goods in the shop windows. There they were, those boys and



girls, loafing about and for ever on the dole ; boys and girls who might now be willing enough to work, but who would soon end up as spivs and pimps and tarts. No, I hadn't any doubt in my mind that things were rotten in West Berlin, and I, for one, was glad when my holiday ended.

A new man had taken charge in room No. 7, in Karlstrasse, but it was still the same room that I had so often seen when sent for by my late boss, Captain Szvershinsky. The new man's name was Gromkov. He was usually dressed in a shabby civilian suit that he had evidently bought off the peg somewhere in Russia. Probably in his early thirties, he had smooth black hair that grew so low on his forehead that it seemed to start but an inch or two above his cold grey eyes.

The office was just as austere as it had been in Szvershinsky's time, the only difference being that the picture of Stalin behind the desk had grown larger. It was now more than life-size.

Unlike his predecessor, Gromkov spoke fluent German. He told me that he was responsible for all the holiday camps in and around East Berlin. "But," he explained, "we are going to retire from the picture more and more and leave the work entirely to the SED."

So that, I thought as I listened to him, is the extent of our progress by 1949. The summer camps of the FDJ, officially declared independent and "above party", were, in fact, a Party affair pure and simple, and no one even attempted to disguise the fact any longer. Indeed, the contrary was the case, for Gromkov left me in no doubt as to the new tough line that was to be adopted. No longer was the emphasis to be on folk dancing, socials, games and hiking ; now the only things of any importance were political indoctrination and the active struggle against Fascist agents, provocateurs and imperialists. These were the instructions that Gromkov gave to me :—

- (1) In each of the thirteen camps in or near Berlin, *Volkspolizei* and detective inspectors are to be infiltrated in order to watch the attendance and report on the general atmosphere.
- (2) For every West Berlin member, who has paid his 15 marks for the course, two index cards are to be kept. If the youth appears to be politically reliable, the head of the camp is to mark one of the cards with red pencil. If the young person proves unreliable, the card is to be filed without red markings, and the first card sent to Gromkov's office.
- (3) Each day at the camp is to have its own slogan, such as "Day of World Youth", "Day of the Great Stalin", "Day of the Socialist Revolution", "Day of the Soviet Union", "Day of the FDJ", and so on.

At the same time, Gromkov instructed me, that all author-collectives—and most authors were made to work collectively—were to be commissioned to write plays on such definite themes as the FDJ catching saboteurs, the *Volkspolizei* arresting and convicting Western agents, and activists inspiring their fellow workers to double their output.

On May 19th, all the thirteen FDJ officials earmarked to be in charge of the Berlin camps were summoned to Rahnsdorf, where they were to receive their final polish and instructions.

I was the chief at Rahnsdorf. I moved back into my old room in which our little baby had died. How often had I stood at that window, so near to the old linden tree that I could almost reach out and touch its branches! I could see a family of ducks waddling across the courtyard and heading for the tub in which the rain water collected. On the canal, which, last summer, we had crossed with our dead child, I could see the very punt that we had used floating past with a party of girls in it, who were waving and shouting at someone on the opposite bank.

I thought of the task ahead of me, and I didn't

like it. I had been given very precise instructions about the new tough line of enforcing the strictest discipline. I had been told that there was to be more "self-criticism" than ever, and that each official on leaving Rahnsdorf to take charge of his own camp, must be prepared to cope with all manners of specific questions and practical problems of which the following are fair examples :—

*Question:* How would you inculcate proletarian vigilance in the camp members?

*Answer:* If needs be, one or two petty thefts must be organised, so that culprits can be unmasked as adherents of bourgeois parties, incited by Western agents.

*Question:* How and why to get non-Party members to join the FDJ?

*Answer:* All that is important is to get the working classes to join the Party and to make the people think in terms of the class struggle. Those who are not Party Comrades are a potential source of danger because, owing to their lack of vigilance, they can be singled out by imperialist agents.

*Question:* How would you deal with anyone found secretly reading detective thrillers?

*Answer:* He should be reprimanded for wasting the pence of the workers and the Party funds. The reading of such books is an indication of bourgeois decadence, and gives Western agents scope for their subversive activities.

*Question:* How would you answer a questioner wanting to know why our prisoners of war have not yet been sent home from the Soviet Union?

*Answer:* One should counter such a question by asking how one would deal with a man who has time and again destroyed the home on which one has lavished so much care.

*Question:* How would you answer a questioner who

wished to know what happened to Max Hölz?\*

*Answer:* First give the factual explanation that Hölz was a working class leader from Thuringia in the early twenties, who happened to lose his life in tragic circumstances. Having established that fact, one should continue as follows: "Comrades, this absurd question as to the whereabouts of Max Hölz is being repeated every few weeks over the Fascist radio network, RIAS, set up by the Imperialist Americans. Comrades, it should be clear to all of you that there is one amongst us who is fool enough to listen to these Fascist agents and is not ashamed to put such a question to us here, etc., etc. . . ."

These were some of the rules and regulations for our guidance at Rahnsdorf. Another was that once one suspected that a spy or a stool-pigeon had been infiltrated into the camp, it was far better to arrest thirty innocent people rather than to take the risk that the one culprit should go free. After all, it was argued, we could trust the *Volkspolizei* to find the one who mattered, and eventually to release the other twenty-nine.

Almost every day Gromkov telephoned to me at Rahnsdorf, being most insistent to know when the course would be completed. During my second week there, he came out himself to have a look round.

I was beginning to be disturbed by his attitude when, on the fifteenth day of the course, I received a further telephone call that put everything else out of my mind. This call was from Jochen Weigert, who told me that the *S-Bahn* strike had broken out and that we were to come at once to Berlin.

\*Max Hölz was a prominent Communist leader in Germany, who was much fêted when he first went to Moscow, but later eliminated on account of "Trotzkyist deviationism".

## EDITOR'S COMMENTARY (iv)

**S**CHAEFFER now comes to that part of his story concerning the grim happenings during the strike of the West Berlin railway men, an event that requires some elucidation.

This strike lasted for nearly six weeks in the early summer of 1949, and caused considerable havoc and dislocation. Its significance was to a great extent political because the Eastern authorities were in control of the S-Bahn system, including the Western sectors which extend beyond the outskirts of Berlin as far as twenty miles from the centre of the city. The strike was caused by the understandable demands of tens of thousands of railwaymen who suffered considerable hardship owing to the fact that they were being paid in East marks, whose exchange rate fluctuated at between twenty and thirty per cent of the value of West marks. As many of these men lived in the West and had to pay their rents and living expenses in West marks, their hardship was very real and called for immediate relief.

However, the Eastern authorities declared that the strike was due to the "machinations of Western capitalism and imperialism", and refused to recognise the true facts of the case and the obvious financial distress of the many thousands of men concerned. Thus the whole situation was blown up into a political crisis of major importance. In the end, it was settled by compromise, the men concerned being given the opportunity of changing a certain proportion of their wages at the rate of one East mark for one West mark, instead of the "stock exchange rate" of between three and five East marks for one West mark.

Before dealing with his own grim experiences during the strike, Schaeffer has some less serious but, at the same time, highly significant matters to report.

## VIII

ON THE following day—a Saturday—at 6 p.m., we boarded at Rahnsdorf Station the *S-Bahn* train due to run via Erkner, along the eastern fringe of Berlin to Wannsee and the West End of the city. In the Eastern sector the trains were still running to time as usual, for the strike, so far, was confined to the three Western sectors.

It was an unpleasant morning, chilly and foggy. Each of my forty pupils had been issued with a knuckle-duster and a rubber truncheon loaded with lead, while four specially chosen comrades and I carried pistols and a round of ammunition each.

None of us said a word. We had a fortnight's tough indoctrination behind us, and all of us were trained and ready to handle any eventuality. Nevertheless, I couldn't help asking myself why there was so little real comradeship between us and the senior officials of the Party. We were for ever talking about friendship. *Freundschaft* was our official mode of greeting, and yet were we really friends? Did we, in fact, know anything about one another? Of course we didn't. I know now what I did not fully realise at that time—that a dictatorial system can only survive so long as there is constant vigilance and everlasting espionage amongst its members. There simply cannot be any purely personal and private aspect to one's life under such a regime. Whatever one feels or imagines is subject to ruthless political analysis. Nothing matters except what benefits the Party. The system, its insistence on self-criticism and proletarian vigilance, exclude the possibility of any kind of private life or personal relationships.

Of the young men sitting in that rumbling train,

silently staring out of the windows, there was not one who wouldn't betray or denounce his fellows in order to prove his own vigilance and devotion to the Party. The fellow sitting opposite me was called Kurzendörfer. He was busy polishing his knuckle-duster by rubbing it up and down his trouser leg. Two years my junior, he had been coached for a couple of years or so in one of the Party schools in the Soviet Union. At Rahnsdorf he had been appointed one of my deputy teachers. He was a stocky chap and extremely strong, and like myself, had been a leader in the Hitler Youth. Suddenly he stopped polishing his knuckle-duster and gave me a searching look.

"Got cold feet, eh?" he asked. "But weren't you in the *Waffen-SS*?"

"Sure I was," I told him. "It's a bit rum, isn't it?"

"What's rum about it?" he grinned.

"Well, having maybe to beat up one's own father in one's own home town," I explained.

Kurzendörfer grinned again, and resumed the polishing of his knuckle-duster.

"So what?" He said airily: "My old man is a railwayman, too. But that's nothing to get sippy about, is it?"

At 7.45, on Ostkreuz Station, one of the border points between the Eastern and Western zones, the traffic was becoming congested. We changed into the circle line train, and on Neukölln Station encountered our first fights. But these involved hardly any railwaymen; most of the combatants seemed to be just spivs and pimps and loafers.

When we arrived at the Tempelhof Station at 9.30, we found some Soviet and American officers carrying on what appeared to be a polite but fruitless negotiation. They were discussing the case of the manager of the Tempelhof railway repair shop, who apparently had been locked up by the West Berliners, although, in fact, that particular repair shop came under the jurisdiction of the East Zonal Reichsbahn control. Since there was nothing we could do, we returned to

the Eastern sector and helped organise some of the emergency traffic to the West, helped by reliable Party technicians. Practically the whole way, we were stoned by the Western populace, and there was scarcely a window in the train that wasn't smashed. But, ironically, the majority of those injured—cut by glass and often bleeding profusely—were unfortunate passengers who had nothing whatsoever to do with the strike.

At 10.15 on the Papestrasse Station, in the West, we met six officers of the Eastern Transport Police, who claimed to have caught three of the hooligan who had kidnapped the manager of the Tempelhof repair shop; we watched them struggling violently with the police as they were frogmarched away. Meanwhile, we honestly believed the slogans spread all over town accusing the American Town Commandant, Colonel Howley, of being the villain of the piece and the instigator of the strike. We longed for the chance to talk to those West Berlin railwaymen, to convince them that they shouldn't let themselves be hoodwinked by the American warmongers.

By noon that day, the FDJ squads, summoned from all over the zone, were arriving at headquarters in Kronenstrasse. So far there were about six thousand of them there, all reliable stalwarts of the FDJ. My old friend Jochen Weigert, who was Heinz Kessler's successor and now chief of the Berlin FDJ, gave them a rousing speech, denouncing "cowboy Howley" and his American warmongers, as well as the rowdies and agents in their pay. Weigert's concluding words were: "In a socialist democracy such as ours there can be no strikes. If we were to permit them we would simply hurt ourselves and damage our own property. After all, the *S-Bahn* is ours, and we will not stand for the imperialist warmongers sabotaging our property".

While all this was going on, quite a number of West Berlin railwaymen had been arrested in the Eastern sector, although they had not joined the strike.



Weigert gave Kurzendörfer and me strict instructions on what to do.

"Don't," he told us, "shoot if you can avoid it, but use your knuckle-dusters wherever necessary."

Then on his map he pinpricked the Schöneberg, Papestrasse, Tempelhof and Westkreuz Stations, all of which were in the Western sector, but guarded by the East German Transport Police.

By 1.30 p.m., six thousand tough FDJ boys were dispatched in lorries to the various focal points in the Western sectors. My own party of forty men, just like the other squads, crouched under a huge tarpaulin in a big truck that took us through the Brandenburg Gate and the most fashionable districts of West Berlin, right up to Halensee, and then on to the goods station at Westkreuz. There wasn't a soul to be seen as we climbed from under our tarpaulin, only burnt-out railway coaches, their compartments smashed, their floors stained with blood.

At two o'clock, our group was surrounded by about a hundred and fifty railwaymen and West Berlin policemen. But Kurzendörfer, by firing his pistol into the air, created a diversion that gave us the chance to dash across the railway track in the direction of Halensee. We split up into parties of three and headed for the huge Broadcasting House in the Masuren-Allee, that was then still a Communist stronghold in the midst of the British sector.

I telephoned Weigert, and Gromkov answered, shouting that we should give them "Hell and plenty of *krawall*"—which was easier said than done.

At 3.30 p.m., as we passed down the Kurfürstendamm, no one took any notice of the three Eastern revolutionaries making their way furtively towards the Broadcasting House. There was a typical Saturday afternoon atmosphere about the Kurfürstendamm. Women wearing sun-glasses sat under the awnings of the open-air cafes, chatting to their menfolk and enjoying their drinks. Other women, carrying baskets, hurried about their last-minute weekend shopping.

Men, with mackintoshes over their arms, ambled home on their way from work. No one was in a hurry, everyone seemed determined to enjoy the sunshine at their leisure. The conductor of the tram clanking down the centre of the broad boulevard sported a flower in his buttonhole.

At 3.45 p.m., we arrived at the Broadcasting House, but found it none too easy to enter for, in accordance with strict orders, we had set out without any means of identification. Luckily, I spotted Helga Jacobi, one of the announcers, and she found a Soviet lieutenant, who let us through the gates. By this time, two or three other of our small parties had arrived, but there were still quite a number who had not yet made it. I realised that it would be even more difficult for them to get in, for, by now, the British Military Police had joined the West Berlin police, and together they had cordoned off every entrance. To counter this move, some Red Army soldiers, with tommy guns at the ready, were posted at the various gates. In the end, our boys managed to get through, and we were all given something to eat, which we badly needed, as we hadn't had a bite of food since early that morning.

Three-quarters of an hour later, several big Russian lorries drew up in the courtyard. We boarded them, were hidden under empty packing cases and driven safely back to the Eastern sector. On the way, I could not help feeling that we hadn't really achieved anything, except being taken for some lorry rides that might have proved dangerous, although they had turned out to be nothing of the kind.

At 6 p.m. that evening, Erich Honecker, President of the FDJ, issued orders to me and my particular squad to give protection, from eleven p.m. on, to three technicians who had to repair a signal-box on the *S-Bahn* near the Schöneberger Ufer, right in the middle of the American sector.

On the way there, I ran into Lilian who was waiting for me in the street.

"I'm so sick of it all," she cried. "This constant suspense ; never knowing whether you will come' back alive ! I can't stand it any longer. Do you hear? I can't stand it, I tell you !"

I did my best to comfort her, but there was really nothing that I could say. We just had to get on with the job and carry out our orders.

At 11 p.m., two lorries took us to the Schöneberger Ufer, where we had some bloody scraps with the Western railwaymen and were also involved in some shooting at the Charlottenburg Station. Comrade Olschewski, one of my boys from Rahnsdorf, a tall, haggard fellow, killed a railwayman by bashing him on the head with an iron bar. Six of my men were taken into protective custody by the West Berlin police, a fact that undoubtedly saved them from being lynched by the indignant crowd.

The following day was a Sunday, and all of us from Rahnsdorf were sent back to the school to finish our course. That evening, it was Kurzendörfer's turn to give a lecture, and the subject he chose was humanism. His argument was that Man, in order to remain the Centre of the Universe, must be educated so as to become a resolute fighter in the class struggle. As he spoke, I kept looking at Comrade Olschewski, sitting in the third row of the lecture hall, remembering how he had battered that railwayman to death the night before.

While the lecture went on, I thought, too, of a telegram that lay on the table in my room, by the open window looking on to the linden tree that said : "Your wife having nervous breakdown. Come at once." But I stayed on at Rahnsdorf to see the course through, and didn't return home until June 3rd.

It happened that June 3rd, 1949, was Ascension Day, a day on which it is customary in Germany to give "stag parties". It is also known as "Father's Day", when, according to tradition, the men go for an outing on their own and do some heavy drinking.

We had forgotten about all this when we foregathered at Rahnsdorf Station on our way home. There were fourteen of us in the party, all wearing our blue shirts with the FDJ badge. At the first stop, Hirschgarten, six men, evidently well away on their "Fathers' Day" party, got into our coach. They wore their straw hats on the backs of their heads, and each had a carnation in his buttonhole and a bottle or two sticking from his pockets. One of them, I remember, a tall, blond chap whose right ear-lobe was missing, wore a sort of cardboard breastplate, bearing the legend, *Mama's Liebling* (mum's darling). When he spotted our blue shirts, he grinned foolishly, took a swig from the bottle he carried, and nudged his pals.

"Look at those bloody FDJ swine!" he shouted.

Just as he said this, the train stopped at Wulheide, where another dozen or so revellers staggered into our coach. They were all drunk, and immediately began jeering at us for wearing blue shirts.

In a second, a free-for-all fight had started. The smallest of our party, young Heinz, was grabbed by two or three hulking louts, half crazy with drink, who tried to throw him out of the train. As some of us rushed to the little chap's rescue, one of the other fellows drew an open knife. But I managed to kick him in the belly, good and hard.

The fight was raging around the half-open door of the coach, for the drunks were set on throwing Heinz on to the line. Suddenly, in the midst of the brawl, Olschewski drew his revolver and shot one of our antagonists in the leg. This had a somewhat sobering effect on them. Just at that moment, the train drew into Karlshorst station, in the centre of the Soviet sector, where a number of Red Army officers were waiting on the platform.

From then on, things happened quickly. All the drunks were arrested by the *Volkspolizei* and all of them took a terrible beating; worse, it seemed to me, than they deserved for what was really little more than a drunken brawl. Six of them, I learned later,

were given severe sentences of as much as from five to ten years hard labour.

In the end, we had to give up our West Berlin flat in Tempelhof. The landlord lost his patience with us, and I couldn't really blame him. It was easy enough to find someone who was anxious to move from East to West, and I discovered a Social Democrat with a suitable flat in Baumschulenweg in the Eastern sector, and exchanged flats with him. But when the time came for us to move, I was in a state of depression again, deeply disillusioned, wondering how much longer I could stand the life in the East and whether it would not be long before I, too, might want to make the irrevocable move from East to West. But by then, the removal van containing all our worldly possessions was already trundling across the border to the Eastern sector.

I was now put in charge of one of the fourteen holiday camps run by the FDJ on the eastern outskirts of Berlin. The particular one to which I was assigned was Paetz, which, of course, was no less familiar to me than it was to Comrade Horst Boddin, who had been appointed my assistant. He had grown fatter than ever since I had seen him last at a certain Christmas party, at which some wag had given him a Christmas box containing a pair of corsets. Horst, who hadn't a sense of humour, failed to see the joke, but ever since, his huge belly had been a source of amusement to us all.

One evening, Boddin and I were alone in my office, sorting out the "white" index cards dealing with unreliable pupils. Although it was our duty to forward these cards to Gromkov, I was none too happy about having to do so, because I felt that I was landing the wretched fellows in trouble.

"Well, Horst," I said, "it's up to us. Shall we do it?"

I had asked the question on an impulse, and was

astonished when Boddin took up a sympathetic attitude. He folded his hands over his huge belly and looked pensive.

"You know," he said, "I've been thinking about that, too. But what can we do?"

"Just not send the cards to Gromkov."

"But can we risk it?" Horst asked, scratching his head.

I felt almost fond of him at that moment. He gave me a short, searching look and then turned quickly to the window, so that he had his back to me. Then, suddenly, he started to talk. He talked of the scruples that had been plaguing him for months; of how he could no longer be certain that everything we were doing was right; and of how, worst of all, he had no one to talk to about all this. Certainly, he said bitterly, he couldn't talk to his father, who had been made a minor official in the *Volkspolizei* and had now become one of the "hundred-and-fifty percenters", as he put it.

I was delighted and surprised to hear all this. So, I thought, there were others who brooded over the problems that worried me. I wasn't alone, after all, and it did me good to realise this. So I told Horst that I for one, from time to time, had been strongly tempted to quit. I told him, too, that I disliked the "new line", and considered it a betrayal of our old aims and ideals.

That night I went to bed happy, for I was not to know that Boddin was already speeding to Berlin in our service car, bound for FDJ Headquarters, to report to the powers-that-be every word I had said.

The axe fell a few days later, on August 5th, 1949, when for the third time in my life I was summoned to appear before a Party tribunal. All my immediate superiors as well as some of my colleagues were assembled in the room. There were Jochen Weigert, head of the Berlin FDJ, and his predecessor, Heinz Kessler, as well as Hermann Axen, now a Party bigshot, Herwart Kurzendörfer, the tough boy, and,

of course, Horst Boddin. He sat on the window-sill grinning at me, just as he had sat on that other window-sill in our office while he had been setting his trap for me. What a cheat and a liar he was! A comrade and a colleague, who had shouted *Freundschaft* at me a dozen times a day! It was unbelievable that a fellow could sink so low.

I hadn't much time to think about all that, for Kessler began shouting at me. I managed to cut him short by throwing all the index cards and an envelope on the table in front of him.

"That contains my written notice," I told him. "I want to quit serving the FDJ."

Hermann Axen went as red as a beetroot. "Comrade Schaeffer," he thundered, "on account of your political unreliability you are forthwith relieved of all your posts and duties."

Weigert looked out of the window with a worried expression on his face. Kurzendörfer and Boddin just grinned at each other, while Kessler glowered at me, and Axen paced furiously up and down the room.

Finally, I left without saying a word and, walking across the corridor to my own office, emptied my desk. Since I was no longer a member of the Party executive, I had no further business there. As I sorted out my private papers, I couldn't help thinking of Lilian who, at that very moment, was probably busy unpacking our belongings in our new flat at Baumschulenweg, in the Eastern sector. Then the door opened and Weigert came in to tell me that I was not to leave yet because the tribunal wanted to see me again.

Back in the room, Axen bawled at me. "Your handing in your notice was a brazen piece of impertinence. I haven't decided yet whether or not to put you on a Party trial. You may as well know that we realise that all this is due to the damned bourgeois influence of your wife."

"Why don't you just let me go to Weimar?" I asked calmly. "You know that all I want is to become a

professional actor, so why not let me go and be rid of me?"

Kessler walked over to me and gave one of his icy, menacing looks.

"You'll do as you're told," he said. "We are wondering whether to send you for a spell in the *Volkspolizei*, but we haven't made up our minds yet. Incidentally," he added, "the Party expects you to get a divorce. Your wife isn't the right sort of woman for you."

So that was it; my wife wasn't the right sort of woman for me! Well, it was considerate of them to tell me so.

"Moreover," Axen broke in, "you are to present yourself at all our fourteen camps in company with Comrade Boddin here, where you will publicly subject your attitude to some self-critical analysis."

I was to stand up on fourteen public platforms, and each time I was to say: "Listen, I have behaved like a *schweinehund*." I was to humiliate myself before the very boys who had been my pupils at Rahnsdorf.

Of that whole collection on the tribunal, Jochen Weigert alone put in a word on my behalf.

"Isn't that asking rather a lot of him?" he questioned.

"We may quite likely ask for a hell of a lot more," Axen sneered, "but that will be all for the moment. Remember, though, that's an order," he added, as he rose and stalked out of the room with the rest of them, leaving me alone with Horst Boddin. He was still standing at the window, but when the others had gone, he turned to me with a grin.

"Believe me, Karlheinz," he pleaded, "I have done this entirely for your own good. You see, I know the Party needs you, and I wanted to save you for the Party."

He stood there with his belly sticking out and a malicious grin on his flabby face. I didn't answer him. Slowly untying the laces, I took off one of my shoes. Then, swinging it, I knocked the living daylight out of Boddin. It did me good.



Afterwards, they had to take him away on a stretcher.

A good many years have passed, and it is difficult to recall now exactly what went on in my mind at that time. However, I quote from my own *Ich-Buch* the following entry written on August 5th, 1949 :—

“The Party is right. I have made mistakes. I have tried to dodge some of my responsibilities. For this I deserve to be punished. I will ask to be given the opportunity to make amends.”

Soon after writing that, in company with Comrade Boddin, I visited all of those fourteen camps. Fourteen times I publicly confessed that I had betrayed our cause, simply so as to satisfy my private ambitions to become an actor. I admitted freely that my lack of proletarian vigilance could easily have made me a tool of monopoly capitalists and imperialist agents.

In every one of those camps I had an attentive and sympathetic audience. For the most part, they listened to me in silence, but those who spoke their thoughts said in effect : “Look at Comrade Schaeffer ! He is streets ahead of us in self-criticism !”

When the summer camps closed down, Gromkov sent for me and gave me some really good material for a suit and a *pajok*; and my own *Zentrale Kultur-Gruppe*\* was solemnly presented with eighteen brand-new trumpets. At the same time, at an official function, no lesser person than Honecker, the Chief of the Free German Youth, referred to me as “our Karlheinz” at least twenty times in his speech, and Axen, too, rehabilitated me in front of all the assembled FDJ officials.

It was at about this time that Gromkov founded the so-called West Bureau. As I was somewhat hazy about its precise functions, it didn't make much sense

\*The Central Cultural Group mainly employed for parades, processions and the like.

to me. However, Horst Boddin was appointed its chief and I was his *Einsatz Referent* (action leader)—a title that sounded impressive enough, but didn't make much sense to me, either.

Jochen Weigert went to Moscow as an honoured guest of the *Komsomol*, and a deputation of my *Zentrale Kultur-Gruppe* complete with their shining new trumpets, appeared on Schönefeld Airport to give him a rousing send-off. I confess that we thoroughly enjoyed it, and at the time gave little thought to those words spoken at the birth of the Free German Youth movement :—

“The first thing that you should realise is that it is not the sound of drums and trumpets that will have a meaning in the future of our youth. You should realise that it is for you to teach young people the merits of quiet reflection, the only atmosphere in which great thoughts and true humanity can develop

(Otto Grotewohl at the  
First Parliament of the FDJ).

“We know well that the flags and streamers, the drums and trumpets of the Third Reich mainly served the purpose of making youth forget that behind all the attractive trimmings stood a corrupt and rapacious ideology.”

(Colonel Tulpanov at the  
First Parliament of the FDJ).

There were plenty of flags and streamers, drums and trumpets in evidence on October 11th, 1949, and we loved every moment of it. My FDJ *Kultur-Gruppe* sounded their fanfares with renewed enthusiasm, for this was the day on which the German Democratic Republic was born. The occasion called for rejoicing and deep, sincere thankfulness.

I saw tears of happiness glistening on the faces of many humble workers in the huge crowd which had gathered to cheer Wilhelm Pieck. He stood in that

historic corner of the Lustgarten before what was once the Imperial Palace, someone from our own ranks, a working man who had risen to be President of the State. Here at last was a working class President in a republic ruled by the working classes.

Pieck was then seventy-three years old. His deeply tanned face under the shock of snow-white hair was radiant. Beside him stood Otto Grotewohl, the new Prime Minister, all the members of the Government and a crowd of diplomats and Red Army officers.

Thousands were crammed into the vast open space of the Lustgarten (now renamed the Marx-Engelsplatz), including delegations from every factory, union and organisation in the Eastern zone, each with its band and banners. All had come of their own free will. They were here to do honour to their new President, Wilhelm Pieck.

After the great parade and demonstration in the Lustgarten all of us leading FDJ officials had orders to proceed to the Alexanderplatz. There, in the democratic heart of East Berlin, a huge crowd was still milling around, and a sort of free discussion was in progress. Horst Boddin had organised this to deal with every topic about which the ordinary people were concerned or worried. We FDJ leaders were instructed to mix with the crowd, stimulating and answering questions.

This seemed a fine idea. The huge square, crammed with eager, festive people was like a vast, open forum. Without even bothering to reassure themselves by a glance at a neighbour or the fellow behind, they argued away eagerly and fiercely, voicing quite freely what was in their minds. Most of the women wanted to know why their boys hadn't come home yet from Russian prison camps, why they didn't get more meat, and why shoes were unobtainable.

Why indeed?

Small groups had formed all over the place, clustered around officials who were patiently explaining Soviet

foreign policy and the aims of our Party. They answered every question put to them: what about the shortage of textiles, and when would something be done about it? Why were people still being arrested without their next of kin being immediately informed? And why did we still require concentration camps?

Why indeed?

There were questions galore, politely asked and just as politely answered. Picked men of the *Volkspolizei* were strolling among the jostling crowd, looking anything but grim as they stopped here and there at groups where the questioners were particularly eager and insistent. It was only after dusk, when they were about to move off home, that some of these more eager questioners were stopped in side streets by men in black, imitation-leather coats—stopped and asked to enter police cars.

Nevertheless, they were asked ever so politely, for this was October 11th, 1949, the day of the birth of the German Democratic Republic.

“Systematic disruption in Western Germany can only be achieved by straining proletarian vigilance and the class struggle, so as to exploit the apathy of the West German population. We must learn from the history of the Party in the USSR. We must make the best use we can of the idea of ‘all-German talks’, in order to drive a wedge into the Bonn splinter Government. And we must never fail to agitate most fiercely against the Occupation forces.”

Thus Hermann Axen, administrative chief of the newly founded West Bureau of the Berlin FDJ. And here are some more specific directives, indicating the object and scope of the new organisation.

- (1) Efforts to be made to sound out the practical possibilities of using West Berlin as a testing ground for the spreading of unrest.
- (2) Infiltration to be made of reliable comrades into the West Berlin youth organisations.

- (3) Organisation of underground *Kader-Gruppen*\* and their gradual infiltration into Western Germany to be effected with the help of the Communist Party, which is to be strengthened by a regular influx of *Ost-Instrukteure* (or special instructors sent over from the East).
- (4) West German comrades to be given regular education courses in the German Democratic Republic.
- (5) West German students as well as unemployed adolescents to be invited on study trips and holidays in the German Democratic Republic.
- (6) Sabotage in Western Germany to be systematically organised.

Right from the beginning, six men were assigned to special duties in the new office of the West Bureau in Hosemannstrasse. None of the six looked particularly youthful, but each wore the blue shirt of the FDJ. In point of fact, they were all fairly senior officials in either the *Volkspolizei* or the State Security Service (Secret Police). One of their duties was to supervise the index cards, carefully kept in a safe, which classified every individual who had attended the summer camps in the vicinity of Berlin. Those cards were graded in three categories :

- (a) *Kaderleute* (meaning persons considered absolutely reliable and suitable for leading positions and important assignments).
- (b) Persons suitable for service as spies and stool-pigeons.
- (c) Members of the ordinary rank and file.

\*Meaning groups consisting of absolutely reliable comrades with some considerable experience in "political warfare". To elucidate the second part of the paragraph it should be borne in mind that while in Eastern Germany the Communist Party was camouflaged as the SED ("Unity Party"), in Western Germany it still appeared under its proper name and even had a dozen Members of Parliament in the Bonn Bundesthaus. Naturally, there is considerable liaison between the East German authorities and the Communist groups in Western Germany.

Towards the end of November, 1949, Jochen Weigert returned from Moscow. I thought it might please him if, just after his arrival, I brought my drummers and trumpeters out to Adlers-Hof, where he lived in a pleasant little cottage. It had become quite a regular custom to serenade prominent comrades in this way on their return from official visits to Moscow.

I lined up my boys in front of Jochen's house, but we had hardly completed the first trumpet call when he appeared at his door, flushed with anger.

"Stop it!" he screamed. Then he drew me aside and took me for a walk around his garden. I was amazed to see the change in him. He looked unhappy and worried.

"For heaven's sake, Karlheinz," he said, "stop this ballyhoo. I can't bear it any longer."

Then he began to blurt out the whole tragic story of his disappointments. He seemed almost cruelly disillusioned. He began by telling me about his recent visit to Moscow, but then suddenly switched back to his last year in England, just before his return home from exile.

"You know," he said, "I used to go out to the P.O.W. camps and address the men, and when I saw them queuing up for my talks I sometimes felt bitter, for I couldn't help thinking that some of them were the same types who might have shouted '*Judenschwein*' after me back home. But then again I felt they might have changed, and that I could talk to them as man to man, without ill feelings. But in Moscow it was quite different. I couldn't have an honest conversation with anybody. I couldn't help feeling that they were just exploiting us. Believe me, Karlheinz, this is the most awful betrayal in the history of our people. And most of us don't even realise it. My God, *we* don't even realise it!"

Jochen squeezed my hand and ran back into his house. Perhaps he didn't want me to see the tears in his eyes.

I was dumbfounded. And this was Jochen Weigert, chief of our Berlin FDJ!

A few weeks later, on New Year's Eve, Jochen died. He was to have given a talk at the Paetz school, but on his way his car crashed into a parking lorry and was smashed to bits. Jochen was taken to Königswusterhausen Hospital, but never regained consciousness. Two Russian specialists, especially flown from Kiev, arrived ten minutes after his death. Wilhelm Pieck ordered a State funeral.\*

The death of Jochen Weigert meant the end of what independence and freedom was still left to German Youth in the Soviet zone. At the same time as Dr. Pallas, chief announcer of the East Berlin Broadcasting House, went on the air with pæans of praise for the dead young leader, Jochen's desk was being searched with a tooth-comb by SSD men (officials of the *Staats-Sicherheit-Dienst*, or Secret Police).

Weigert's successor was Robert Menzel, who up to then had been FDJ chief in the province of Sachsen-Anhalt. True, he had an excellent anti-Fascist record. He had spent practically the whole of the Nazi period serving a sentence of twelve years' hard labour in Brandenburg Gaol, and when they had drafted him into the Wehrmacht early in 1945, he had taken the first opportunity of deserting to the Red Army.

Even so, Menzel destroyed whatever idealism remained in the upper hierarchy of the Berlin FDJ. This he did by importing 150 senior officials from Saxony, thus turning the place into a hatching ground of suspicion, fear and cynicism. Most of the boys and girls of the rank and file, of course, knew little about this, but among the leaders no-one from now on dared to trust his colleague. Fear and hatred stalked among us.

\*Schaeffer believes that Weigert met his death by foul play, and he is by no means the only one who thinks so. Needless to say, when I tried to check this point with various major and minor leaders in Eastern Germany, I was indignantly informed that these wide-spread rumours were base calumny, and that Weigert was a loyal Communist up to his untimely death and tragic end.

The *Volkspolizei* now took an active hand in the routine instruction of the FDJ. So-called *Alarm-Aktive* (activist groups for emergencies) were organised in every district, each of them composed of fifteen to twenty carefully selected youngsters. The first *Strategisches Seminar*, or course specially devoted to military training, was inaugurated at Bogensee. Only reliable senior officials were admitted to it, and these were part of the syllabus :—

- (1) Rifle shooting,
- (2) Machine-gun training,
- (3) Theory and practice of partisan fighting,
- (4) Theory and practice of sabotage,
- (5) Technique of producing street riots.

Hans Gossens, who was certainly a highly qualified expert, was appointed head of the course. He had been one hundred per cent Nazi before turning one hundred per cent Communist. He had served as an *Oberleutnant* in the Wehrmacht, and had earned the Knight's Cross for "ruthless valour in action".

At long last the traditional German *Untertan*, for ever ordered about by his superiors, must learn to be a free citizen, responsible only to himself, to his nation and to the civilised world.

(Otto Grotewohl at the  
First Parliament of the FDJ).

Never again must German Youth be used as a tool in a rapacious war. German Youth must seek and find its own way towards a peaceful future.

(Colonel Tulpanov at the  
First Parliament of the FDJ).

Under the Third Reich German Youth was poisoned by idolatry. Whilst the children of other nations were given a chance to learn, German children were merely used for drilling and political demonstrations, and in the last resort denouncing their elders to the Gestapo.

(Otto Grotewohl at the  
First Parliament of the FDJ).



## IX

AT SCHWERIN, capital of Mecklenburg, a great meeting had been arranged for the FDJ of that rural province. There were to be the usual parades and speeches, and I was to write a play to be produced specially for the occasion. In due course, I received my orders from the *Kultur-Secretariat*. In fact, I received very precise instructions; all that remained for me to do was write the play. These were the instructions: -

*Background* Activists, shock-workers and juvenile land-workers.

*Theme* Treason and sabotage in the country districts of Mecklenburg.

*Heroes* The local FDJ group in the village, the activists and the shock-workers.

*Villains* Reactionary *Altbauern*\*.

*Subsidiary* The much harassed mother of the family;

*Characters* the father who, unlike the *Altbauern*, had some growing understanding of the Party and the Land Reform; the *Volkspolizei*, befriending and protecting the rural population.

*Story* A misguided young land-worker almost falls into the clutches of monopoly-capitalist and imperialist agents and provocateurs, but finally sees through their

\* *Altbauern* was a term used for peasants and farmers settled in the district before the Land reform of the regime; i.e. before the *Neubauern* were introduced, meaning land workers who were given a strip of soil of their own as well as cattle and the use of machinery on the co-operative system. The *Neubauern* were supposed to be loyal Party men, and were given a good many privileges denied the *Altbauern*.

wiles, thanks to the proletarian vigilance of his own family.

The play I wrote on these lines was called "*Hans Ist Auf Draht*" (a title which might be freely translated "Cock-a-Hoop Johnny"). For two nights we rehearsed the thing until we nearly dropped with fatigue; for most of the boys and girls who acted in the play had also to work in their factories or on the land all day, and were usually dead tired before we started. I was genuinely surprised when twenty-year-old Wolfgang Müller told me: "Karlheinz, we are doing this for you, because we know that you have nothing to lose and everything to gain."

This gave me quite a shock. Did he know more than I did? Was I really a marked man and still unaware of it?

We rehearsed at the State Theatre of Schwerin, and things went well until Sonja Klinz arrived and began to take a hand. She was one of the more nauseating female bigshots of the FDJ, and she immediately announced that the play was altogether not strong enough in the Party line. She further objected to the absence of a portrait of Stalin on the set.

That could have been easily remedied, but what we could not stomach was her general attitude of sneering criticism, to say nothing of the half-dozen or so male Party hacks she had brought along with her. Perhaps we were all a bit on edge, for before long a good old free-for-all was in progress, and the Klinz woman's noisiest supporter got a hook that dropped him into the prompter's box. The din was indescribable, and the old fireman of the theatre surveyed the scene flabbergasted. "I've been here for nearly thirty years," he said, "but I've never yet seen a dress rehearsal like this."

Even so, though it seemed hardly believable, all went swimmingly on the first night. The audience actually appeared to like the play. After the performance, Wolfgang Müller and two or three of his friends went out for a glass of beer. It was very late when

they returned to our lodging in the Maxim Gorki Home, and it was very early next morning when we left for the station. Here we were surprised to see hundreds of those famous little tabs displaying the red "F" all over the place.\* The *Volkspolizei*—at least a dozen of them—were busily scraping them off wherever they could spot them. Fortunately, it was still so early that most of the Schweriners were asleep in their beds. As we waited for the train, Müller raised a storm about the lack of vigilance of the police. That sort of thing, he said, should never have been allowed to happen.

At the Friedrichstrasse Station in Berlin, before parting, I went to have a drink with Wolfgang. He had always seemed a queer cuss to me, so quiet and calm, quite unlike most of us. As he took his cigarette case from his pocket, a red "F" tab fell out and fluttered to the floor. Müller quickly covered it with his foot, giving me a calm, unperturbed look. For a moment I could not say a word, I was so dumbfounded.

In January, 1950, the Winter Sports Finals of the German Democratic Republic were to be held at Schierke in the Hartz Mountains, which is only a few miles from the West German border. That was one of the reasons for putting the thing over in a big way, to impress those West German sportsmen who had accepted invitations. I and my group had been commissioned to stage one or two shows in the Schierke Theatre.

When we showed up at the lodgings assigned to us, our hosts received us with expressions almost as icy as the air outside. Some of them actually banged their doors in our faces. Others showed us to rooms which were practically uninhabitable, for there were no mattresses on the beds and no bulbs in the lamps.

"Very well," snapped one white-haired landlady.

\*See footnote, page 115.

"If you wish to sleep here, I can't stop you." Then she pointed to the framed photograph of a young officer on the mantelpiece.

"That was my son," she said. "He was killed in action. If he were here now he would horsewhip you off the premises."

These people really hated us. They hated everyone who wore the blue shirt. However, we had to sleep somewhere, so the quartermaster assigned us to new lodgings.

In the meantime, the *Volkspolizei* had expropriated some of the most stubborn of the landlords. Now at last we found well heated rooms with freshly made beds. My host, who owned a small boarding house with six or seven rooms, was very old and looked extremely dignified with his black velvet cap and the cane on which he hobbled about. He asked with a stony face if I required him to clean my shoes, and if his wife was to do my washing and ironing.

I just shook my head, and then, as I stood by the freshly made bed, I felt ashamed. That night I crept into their kitchen and placed a large sausage on their table—one that Lilian had given me to bring along. It had arrived in her mother's last parcel from the Argentine. I also left two boxes of cigarettes.

Two days later, just as we were about to leave for Berlin, the old man hobbled after me as far as the garden gate holding out the sausage and the cigarettes.

"You've left these behind," he said.

Hatred, apparently, can be even stronger than hunger.

When Walter Ulbricht, the all-powerful Party boss and Deputy Prime Minister, arrived at Schierke, followed by a procession of large cars, servants rushed forward to carry his luggage, but Ulbricht would have none of it.

"In a People's Democracy a man carries his own suitcase," he said in his thick Saxon accent.

I was introduced to the great man by one of his secretaries.

"So you are Comrade Schaeffer," he said. "They've told me about you. Good boy!"

Then he passed on, but the secretary who had introduced me to him drew me aside. I was to keep a good eye, he said, on those West German sportsmen, and report to Berlin anything that seemed in the least suspicious. It was quite likely that the occasion had been used for the infiltration of spies and saboteurs.

The very next day it chanced that some of the wooden stands in the Winter Sports Stadium collapsed. Fortunately, they were unoccupied at the time. "The work of Western saboteurs", was the immediate reaction.

In point of fact, the collapse was partly due to the wind, but even more so to the hasty and thoroughly shoddy construction of the stands. The official in charge, Comrade Feist, was at once arrested, despite the fact that his wife was a Party bigshot and the "pin-up girl of the FDJ". But then, she was not reputed to have much use for her husband.

Back in Berlin, I sat for the "Golden Badge of Knowledge". It was supposed to be none too easy to pass this test, but I got the Badge, as did most of the other senior officials.

The next day, we "Golden Ones" had to conduct the test of the smaller fry sitting for the "Silver Badge". We had been given strict instructions to see to it that most of those who got the badge had genuinely proletarian backgrounds. In other words—at least that was how I interpreted the order—we were to make things difficult for the kids with bourgeois backgrounds. One of the few such in my group was Misha Benjamin. He was the chap who had been praised so highly when we stormed the Town Hall, but he nevertheless had a definitely bourgeois background, and was a university student as well, so I put some questions to him of which even he was unlikely to know the answers. These were some of them:—

What exactly is the meaning of the Bucharin Movement?

What was Stalin's relation to Kirov?

Give a brief outline of the part played by Stalin during the Wars of Intervention.

Frankly, I could not have answered these myself ; I had just picked them out of a book. Benjamin did not know the answers, either, so I duly failed him.

A few minutes later, I got bawled out by Menzel in no uncertain manner.

"You bloody fool !" he said. "Don't you know that he is the son of the Vice-President of the Supreme Court of the Republic?"

"So what?" I asked.

Menzel got almost blue in the face and shouted that we were making ourselves look like fools.

I called Misha in again, put some easier questions to him, and passed him.

My next job was a teaching assignment at a newly established special school in Priero, about six kilometres from Königswusterhausen. It was, not to put too fine a point to it, simply a school for spies and agents. I had certainly come up in the world !

When the thirty-three boys and nine girls drafted to that course had climbed off the lorry that brought them, I suddenly felt that, so far as I was concerned, it was the beginning of the last round. I was not quite sure yet whether I should lose the round on points or by a knockout, but I felt none the less that I should lose it.

Three of the nine girls I knew definitely to be members of the State Security Service. They were just Secret Policewomen, and for them to wear the blue shirt of the Free German Youth seemed simply a joke—and not too good a joke at that.

As for the men, I could not be quite sure which of them had police badges in their pockets, for some of them were rather more of the criminal type. The last

to jump off the lorry was a slim lad wearing horn-rimmed spectacles. I could hardly believe my eyes. It was Wolfgang Müller! He gave me a cheery wink. Good God, I thought, if only they knew!

It is possible that some of the boys and girls who jumped off that lorry may not have known just what they had let themselves in for. In point of fact, they had been told that they were to attend a course of cultural and political education, but what they were really to be taught was that a person when so required by the Party must be prepared to betray his parents, leave his wife, and assert that twice two is five. Whoever graduated from Priero had to be ready to join the State Security Service, accept any assignment from them and forget entirely his personal loyalties and his private life.

The syllabus had been drawn up by Captain Svotkin, and it included:—

Training in reconnaissance.

Coding and decoding.

How to get rid of incriminating evidence in the case of arrest.

How to surprise and overpower sentries.

How to organise sabotage.

I could not help asking myself how exactly this sabotage was defined. What we had previously called it—and it had happened frequently enough—was the destruction of the property of the German Democratic Republic by spies infiltrated from the West. Yet if some of our lads were to sabotage a Western factory, we would call it “a patriotic act in the fight for peace”. So, come to think of it, what we were being taught should not have been called sabotage, but the patriotic fight for peace.

But it would be wrong to assume that the members of our course felt that they were being slave-driven. Nothing of the sort; most of them were perfectly happy. They were thrilled by the adventure of it, and their ambitions were aroused. The girls were even more fanatical than the boys, and some of them

seemed almost deliriously happy to learn this grim technique of destruction. On the whole, the teachers could have been well satisfied with the results. Most of them were, of course, highly qualified technicians of the Security Service, men who had been taught in special Soviet schools for many years. These ones were satisfied indeed.

But I was not. And I was definitely taken aback when young Wolfgang Müller, normally so calm, gave vent to his agitation in the privacy of my office. He told me that in one of the debates he had argued that it could not possibly be the wish of the Party for us to idolise every Soviet citizen. Surely we should have more pride for, after all, the Russians were human beings too and liable to make mistakes. At that, he told me, he had been accused of having a negative conception of the great Soviet Union, which was tantamount to being a crypto-Fascist.

"You are the boss here," he shouted at me, "and you will jolly well have to say something. That's the least you can do."

That evening, in the general debate, I did. The whole school was assembled, and my teacher colleagues were all sitting in the front row.

"Do you really think that our Russian friends expect us to suck up to them?" I asked. "Some of you remember Captain Szvershinsky. I for one can never forget how, after some show or other, he told me: 'I had really hoped to see some nice German folk dancing, but all you people did was merely a third-rate imitation of the Russian.' I think Comrade Müller is right. A little more pride would do us no harm."

When I had said it, the quiet in the room was so intense for a moment as to be almost painful. I could see the glint in some eyes: now you've given yourself away, it said. Now we've got you!

On the wall hung the inevitable picture of Stalin. It hung in precisely the same spot where, six years earlier, there had been one of Adolf Hitler. I remem-



bered it well, for it happened that Priero was a Hitler Youth School in those days, and that in that very room I had had to give a lecture on the sacred duties of German youth in total war.

It was not a pleasant memory, but I could not help recalling it as I felt my comrades staring at me. I looked over at Müller, and he answered my glance as calmly as usual.

Later that night he came to see me in the privacy of my room.

"You should accept every assignment they offer you," he told me. "By now I suppose you are wise to what is really happening in the German Democratic Republic, and I imagine you like it as little as I do. I am younger than you are, but let me tell you, if one wants to fight something one must study it first and know all about it. That's why I think you should do all they ask you to do, to the very limit of what you can answer for to your conscience."

In April, 1950, they appointed me Chairman of the Friedrichshain District of the FDJ. It was a pretty important job, and once again I had an office and a secretary, this time in Kadinerstrasse, opposite the magnificent Stalin Allee. I had my service car back again, but very soon they took it away and gave me a new one, and a new driver, too, Comrade Jersch. The previous one, I was told, had been driving too carelessly. Evidently they were concerned for my safety.

One of my first tasks was to try to reduce the 45,000-mark deficit left me by my predecessor. For that purpose I decided to organise a big summer fête in the Friedrichshagen Stadium.

To make this really worth while, I knew that it had to be done in a big way. I wanted to get hold of the best dance bands in the Republic, and went specially to Leipzig to book Kurt Henkels, the most popular of them all. He asked 1,500 marks, but he was worth it.

On June 7th, 1950, the huge stadium was crowded. As each finished his number, the band leaders came to my treasurer to collect their fees. I had made all of them sign an undertaking not to play jazz, but when Mecki Mischka and his boys broke into "The Skyliner", everybody roared with delight.

I was not very happy about this, thinking of the huge streamer over the gate of the stadium with its legend: "With the Soviet Union for Peace and Progress against the Warmongers of the U.S.A.". Nevertheless, our audience of seven thousand stamped their feet and yelled with delight. I did not know to what extent some of them were anti-American, but certainly none of them was anti-jazz.

"Look here, we've run out of money," my eighteen-year-old treasurer whispered in my ear. I thought I hadn't heard him aright.

"Seven thousand people cheering like mad, every seat sold, and yet no money?" I gripped the boy's shirt and shook him. "Are you crazy? I'll wipe the floor with you if you're not careful!"

But Kraft—that was his name—was a typical Berlin cockney, not easily ruffled.

"Let go of my shirt," he said. "Wiping the floor with me can wait. First, you'd better go to those band boys and tell them there's no dough because they've broken their undertaking."

He had something there, certainly, so I went over to Mecki Mischka's rostrum.

"'Skyliner' is American," I said. "No more money for you."

"My good boy, can't you read?" So saying he held out the score. "*Wolkenstürmer*", it was headed, which was as near as possible a German translation of "Skyliner".

There was nothing I could do about it. All the other band leaders declared they would now play hot music. They could not let their audience down, and they owed it to their reputation.

Later, and into the early hours, we cross-examined

young Kraft, the treasurer. My driver, Jersch, took quite a hand in this.

"I just haven't got the money," the boy said, "and I haven't the foggiest idea where it could be."

Finally we had to let him go, but later that morning he disappeared.

Detective-Inspector Paal was now appointed to investigate the matter. Paal was not a member of the State Security Service; he was a proper policeman and knew his job. Within a couple of hours he had found out all we wanted to know. In our office safe he had discovered two thousand unsold tickets, which seemed suspicious, considering that every seat in the stadium was filled. He found the advanced booking lists, and duly collected a substantial amount from the agencies. Finally, he discovered that the owner of the stadium, knowing he would be expropriated before long, had printed substitute tickets for those left in the safe, and sold them himself. As for the accounts of my fugitive treasurer, they were in perfect order, except for a deficit of two *pfennigs*.

"I'll make that good myself," said Detective-Inspector Paal with a grin.

But even he could not tell us exactly why young Kraft had done a bunk.

None of this made sense to me, although, later, I was to learn otherwise. At the time, since the investigation had established that young Kraft was not responsible for the deficit, which was solely due to the owner of the stadium who had now himself disappeared, it didn't make sense that I myself should be under suspicion, too. But I had no doubts on this score. Clearly, my desk had been tampered with in my absence. And as for my colleagues, whenever I entered a room, they stopped short in their conversation, shutting up like clams. I knew for certain that my telephone was being tapped and, although no one mentioned it, it was obvious that they suspected me of being in league with my runaway treasurer. Since their attitude towards me couldn't possibly have

anything to do with money, there must have been other reasons for it. Finally I became so disgusted that I determined to get to the bottom of it all.

So I went to see Robert Menzel at the Head District Administration Office. There I found that the upper floor in the Hosemannstrasse was not only locked up, but guarded by two sentries. Behind those locked doors were the offices of the new West Bureau.

Menzel kept me waiting two hours. Robert Menzel, who had once been so affable, now apparently had no time for me. Yet when eventually he condescended to see me, he was as friendly as ever and told me not to worry. He said, in fact, that I was one of the Party's best comrades and that the Berlin FDJ was proud of me.

"You seem a bit run down," he added, with a smile. "What you need, my boy, is a holiday. I only wish I could send you to one of those nice Bulgarian resorts, but they don't accept anybody who has been in the SS. So you'd better go to Ahlbeck. Take Lilian along with you and have a good time."

So we were to have a holiday at Ahlbeck, then not only one of the most popular seaside resorts in Eastern Germany but one of the few remaining places left intact to us on the German Baltic coast. Lilian and I definitely looked forward to that holiday. To have no course, no schooling, no State Security Service, but instead blue skies and a yellow beach dotted with deck-chairs and cheerful people, seemed a merciful respite.

But before starting on our holiday, my driver, Jersch, took Lilian and me to Weimar, where I wanted to see Professor Lange at the Academy of Dramatic Art. He was most kind and said that he hoped I could start work with him next term. I certainly hoped so, too. Having nothing else to do that evening in Weimar, we decided to celebrate by going to the "Intourist", one of those Soviet-sponsored restaurants and night-clubs to be found in any large town in the Eastern Zone. It was the sort of place frequented

only by Soviet officers and high-ups in the Party. But we thought that, for once, we might as well have a proper night out, and, of course, we took our driver, Jersch, along too. The "Intourist" was a really smart place such as I had not seen for a long time; the waiters, wearing tails, floated over the soft carpets; the wine list was four pages long. On the bar stools, between the officers and officials, sat some hand-picked girls of the Party demimonde, giggling coyly when some bigshot's hand fiddled with a suspender or found its way down a decidedly plunging neckline. One of their most persistent customers was an elderly bespectacled man, with hardly a hair left on his large, shining, pink pate.

"Something wrong with the seam of your stocking, sweetie-pie?" he would say. "Better let daddy look after it." And, with that, he would kneel on the floor and attend to the stocking.

"You mustn't tire yourself so early in the evening," sweetie-pie chirruped back, spilling a few drops of champagne on the bald dome at her feet.

With drunken persistence, the old gentleman insisted that all the nylon seams in the restaurant needed his personal attention. But when he finally staggered over to our table and tried his tricks on Lilian, I broke a wine glass over his head. The glass was very thin and the old fool so drunk that he didn't even feel it; nor did he notice when a Russian major, sitting at the far end of the bar, took aim with some cocktail glasses and hurled them one after the other at his head as he lay sprawled on the floor.

One of the waiters hurried forward to sweep the broken glass from the carpet.

"That's Major Pavlov," he whispered to us, "one of the best shots in the Red Army."

"And who is the target?" I asked.

"Oh, he's the Weimar District Leader of the SED."

When we arrived at Ahlbeck, Jersch stayed with us for four days before returning home. I was asked

to report at the office of the State Security Service, but they gave me a very polite explanation for troubling me. "We just want to check up on some of the Berlin comrades spending their holidays here," they told me.

In the room next to ours at the hotel, I discovered by accident, was a Potsdam detective-inspector. As for the chambermaid who looked after us, I saw her disappear every night into the local SSD building. For a chambermaid, she looked unusually intelligent and was a little too polite, always addressing me as "Herr Schaeffer". On the beach, the deck-chair next to us was always occupied by a bulky blonde I recognised as having attended one of my Rahnsdorf courses a year or two before. I remembered that, after graduating, she had entered the State Security Service.

So this was our holiday at the seaside!

"Do let's go home," Lilian pleaded. "I can't stick it here for a moment longer!"

I rang up Berlin and asked the office to send the car for us. That evening, a telegram arrived: "*Auto kaputt, Jersch*". So we went home by train.

At the door, of my office, my secretary told me curtly that unfortunately I was forbidden to enter. As she said this, I looked through the window and saw Jersch pull up in my car that was supposed to be out of order. Beside him sat a woman with untidily cropped hair, wearing a blue shirt that seemed on the point of bursting open over her enormous breasts.

"I'm Inge Rosch," she told me gruffly as I walked over to the car. "So you're Schaeffer. I suppose you've been told that you have no business here? Your accomplice, Werner Kraft, has been arrested. He has confessed to being an agent of the Western warmongers and one of your helpmates. We'll see about you later."

At my flat, I found the cupboards ransacked. All the letters my mother-in-law had written to me from the Argentine were missing. While I stood staring

at the mess, my driver, Jersch, leant against the door, quietly smoking a cigarette.

"Who did all this?" I asked angrily, pointing to the cupboard.

"I did," he replied, and produced a badge identifying himself as a senior officer of the State Security Service.

This all took place on July 20th, 1950. The following day, Lilian gave me a freshly ironed blue shirt from the cupboard, and I put on all my badges and medals: the Golden Badge of Knowledge, the Badge of the World Youth Union, the Badge of the Free German Trade Union, the *Komsomol* Badge, two Chinese medals, the Dimitrov Pin, the SED Badge, the Badge of the Society of German-Soviet Friendship, the Sports Medal for Cross-Country Running, the Peace Congress Plaque, the United Germany Plaque, the Polish Activists' Badge, and the big Badge of the FDJ. Altogether they made an impressive array and, except for the colour of my shirt, I must have looked like an imitation Hermann Göring!

But I didn't feel in the least light-hearted as I set out determined to see Robert Menzel and to make him tell me exactly why I was being constantly watched and humiliated. After all, I had worked for the FDJ and the Party for four years. And now, was this to be the end?

I never saw Menzel. Indeed, I only got within a few yards of the familiar building in Hosemannstrasse, before I saw a black limousine parked outside. As I passed it, two men jumped out and quickly hustled me into the car.

Thus I was arrested.

The fact that they had taken away my medals and badges didn't worry me much, but that they had taken my watch as well was a decided nuisance. Anyway, I guessed it was about four o'clock. The cell was stiflingly hot and, worst of all, I couldn't open the

window. To do so, I would have needed the key kept by my guard.

Lilian, I reflected, was probably not yet aware of my arrest. She and my friends would imagine me at some conference or rehearsal for, since it was only a few days before the Party Congress, when my *Kultur-Gruppe* were to play a big part in the show to be staged at the Opera House, by rights I should have been up to my eyes in work. Very well, I thought, they could somehow manage without me. But how, I asked myself?

Then I began to wonder what they would do with me here? Would they beat me up? They would certainly have to if they wanted a confession for, in truth, I had nothing to confess.

I heard steps coming down the corridor. Would they pass my cell or were they coming for me? I was not left long in doubt, for presently the door opened and one of the *Vopo*\* stood there in his black uniform, a pistol in his belt. He was younger than I, but he tried to look very severe and haughty. His bare lip looked like a notch in a piece of wood.

"Come along, Schaeffer," he ordered, impatiently rattling his keys.

As I walked with him along the corridor, I had no illusions about what I was in for. I had seen it too often before, even though, so to speak, I had been then on the other side of the fence. He would take me to one of those dismally depressing rooms in the enormous building, and behind a desk I would face a Commissar of the State Security Service, while from the wall a friendly, smiling Stalin would watch me being softened up with all the psychological tricks and progressive methods of an Eastern-style cross-examination.

After walking through the seemingly endless corridors of that cheerless building near the Alexanderplatz, we entered just such a room as I had pictured. Then I

\*The slang name for members of the *Volkspolizei*.



received my first shock. Behind the desk sat an old acquaintance of mine, Comrade Alexander. An old friend, to be sure, but at the same time an SSD Commissar. I wondered whether I should slap him on the back as usual and ask to have a look at the pornographic photographs he always carried in his pocket. I decided that in the circumstances that wouldn't be quite proper. Prisoners were merely supposed to answer questions.

But as Comrade Alexander nervously thumbed through a file of papers, he seemed at a loss what questions to ask me. He had always been a little soft in the head, but now he seemed even more confused than usual.

"Well, Comrade," he stuttered. "The position is that . . . I mean to say, once you search your political consciousness thoroughly you will come to certain conclusions. . . ."

"Party Chinese" we used to call this sort of thing !

I suddenly felt sorry for the fellow. He was a man of about forty, and wore a crumpled standard suit from one of the State-controlled shops. His shirt collar was much darned at the edges, and none too clean ; being a class-conscious Communist, he didn't wear a tie.

Before 1945, Comrade Alexander had been just an unskilled labourer. He had been caught out in some petty offences, and the State Security Service had given him the option of either going to gaol or doing some of their dirty work for them. He had started in a small way as an informer, but being blindly devoted to the Party, had progressed until he actually reached the rank of commissar. He might well be set for a real career ; alternatively, he might break his neck. The odds were he would get on first and then break his neck afterwards. There were plenty of fellows of his sort in the enormous machinery of the State Security Service, but there was nothing more tiresome to such a service than stupid people who knew too much. Because of that fact, I felt certain that one day they



accountants or post office clerks, but no casting director would ever have considered them for the role of policemen.

Apart from these two and our driver, there was another fellow, called Georg Silbermann, in the car. Since he had attended the Lenin School in the Soviet Union and now sat as a member of the *Kultur-Sekretariat* of the FDJ District Administration, he was by way of being my chief. Once we had been on quite friendly terms, but now he appeared embarrassed and didn't seem to know what to say or how to look at me, so sat nervously chewing his nails.

We drove to Baumschulenweg, but before we reached Number 27, the elder of the two SSD men took off my handcuffs. He and his colleague stayed in the car whilst Georg came up with me to my flat. Lilian was feeding the baby. She had obviously just returned from shopping, for on the table lay her shopping bag with some rhubarb sticking out of it.

I took off my coat and threw it on the couch. Here, in my own home, the experience of the past few hours seemed to me as unreal as a cheap detective thriller. The sun shone through the curtains which only yesterday I had helped Lilian to hang after she had washed them. From the kitchen came the succulent smell of a stew cooking on the stove; over the radio came the strains of dance music. At that time of day it would be the Kurt Edelhagen band, which was one of our favourites.

"Finished for the day?" Lilian asked me as she gave me a kiss.

"We've got to go out again," Georg said, trying to hide his embarrassment by kneeling on the floor and playing with the baby. "Karlheinz just wants a bath," he added casually.

I wondered what instructions they had given my old friend Silbermann. Since he never let me out of his sight, I had no chance of telling Lilian anything. Even when I went into the bathroom, Georg followed me and sat down on the lavatory seat. But he still

wouldn't open his mouth, and I began to feel irritated.

"You can at least scrub my back," I shouted at him.

Georg, who seemed to have sunk into a deep reverie, was startled into action, so that he actually grabbed the brush and proceeded to scrub my back with a vengeance. But he still didn't say a word.

"Now, what about it, Georg?" I asked, squirting some water in his face. He still seemed to be moving in a dream.

"Stop it, Karlheinz," he growled. "I'm not in a joking mood."

When we went downstairs and got into the car again, one of the State Security men promptly handcuffed me again. So what?

It was a silent drive. How often, I thought, had I gone by this route in my service car—through the Köpenicker Landstrasse, past the Treptow Park and the Schlesiischestrasse, and then, just for a short distance, through the American sector; then down Warschauerstrasse and Dimitrovstrasse, turning right into the Greifswalderstrasse, and so to our office in Hosemannstrasse.

How well I knew every inch of those streets and every one of the pubs where so often, after a heavy day's work, I would stop and have a quick one with my driver, Jersch. And now? Now I couldn't get my hands apart more than a few inches.

The sun had set, and although it was almost dark, it was still very hot. The rubber coats of the two SSD men didn't smell too good.

As we approached the last few hundreds yards separating us from the American sector, I wondered whether I should smash the window with my handcuffs and start screaming, but immediately dismissed the idea as nonsense. Ask for help from the American Military Police? Eat humble pie in the West, against whose political views I had been fighting for so long? Like hell, I would!

The odds were that the whole business would

probably soon be explained as some stupid misunderstanding. Anyway, we had again reached the sector boundary, where two West Berlin policemen were having a quiet chat with a lorry driver, and in a few seconds we would be back in the Eastern zone.

It was getting on for ten o'clock as we pulled up at No. 14, Hosemannstrasse, and climbed the stairs to my office in the FDJ Headquarters. The older of the two SSD guards again took off my handcuffs, and I wondered vaguely whether he didn't get tired of doing this so often. Apparently, he didn't seem to like it, but it was his job and he was being paid for it.

On my desk I found a programme of the show which had to be licked into shape within the next forty-eight hours. As I took off my coat, I forgot all about the SSD and their handcuffs. The programme was impossible. As it stood, it would last at least four hours, and when one considered that another three hours would be needed for speeches, it seemed a bit much to offer even to a hardened Party audience. Obviously a lot of major and minor Party bosses had been fussing over the *Kultur* aspect of the programme, for there were endless marginal notes and suggestions such as: "What about the idea of expressing the achievements of our Socialist State by means of a specially composed ballet?" That particular note, which had been initialed by one of the high-ups, gave me a good laugh. I took a blue pencil and began to cut that programme down by a couple of hours.

Once I had settled down to the job, Georg Silberman proved quite helpful. But, by the time we had finished, it was long past midnight, and the two SSD men were hunched in their chairs fast asleep. The younger one was snoring loudly, but it was uncanny to see his ill-fitting glass eye, only partly covered by the lid, still staring at us. It reminded me ludicrously of the famous slogan: "The State Security Service never sleeps".

During all the time we had been working, Georg

and I had only spoken of the job in hand. Not a word had been said about my arrest, but, then, I wasn't worrying about that any more. My only thought was how to lick the show into shape in the two days and one night at my disposal. Fortunately, the centre piece of the programme, Friedrich Wolf's play, *The Sailors of Catarro*, was no problem, for we had played it so often that one more rehearsal was all that we needed.

It was dawn as we sped home to Baumschulenweg through the empty streets. The rising sun gave a golden sheen to the ruins and rubble lining our route. It was going to be another hot day ; even so early in the morning, one could sense it.

Georg came up to the flat with me and dosed down on the couch. I looked out of the window and saw that the car with my two escorts had gone ; then I glanced at Georg, recognising the look of fear in his eyes. Evidently, I thought, he was being held responsible for me. So I left the door open as I walked into my bedroom. Lilian was still awake and threw her arms round my neck, kissing me.

"Don't say anything if you don't want to," she told me.

I couldn't have done so, anyway. I had meant to tell her everything, but now I just fell asleep in her arms, worn out.

It was now July 22nd, 1950. In the next room Georg Silberman was snoring. By ten o'clock my escort was back. This time they came to fetch me in a Black Maria. By now, Lilian knew all about it, but I wanted to say something tender and kind to her before leaving. However, the SSD man was waiting with his blasted handcuffs. This morning he was fully shaved and wore mufti, having left his black raincoat at home. He even wore a tie—red artificial silk with white polka dots. Under his left armpit his jacket bulged. One might have imagined him as being blessed with a particularly fat wallet, but I knew better, for I, too, used to carry my revolver

like that. The man's name was Besecke, and I held out my hands to him like a customer in a smart hairdressers' shop, waiting for a manicure.

We went to the Opera House opposite the Friedrichstrasse Station, pulling up in the courtyard and entering by the stage door, without anyone noticing us. I walked in unshackled, for Besecke had once more unlocked my handcuffs while we were still in the car.

On the stage there was the usual turmoil, but as soon as they saw me, my friends ran up shouting with delight. Everyone shook my hands.

"Who the devil are those types?" asked little Willi, pointing at my two guards.

"Shut up!" I hissed, "they're just some pals of mine."

"You certainly seem to mix with some pretty odd people," said Willi, unabashed. He was a baker's apprentice in the Western sector, and usually arrived with his pockets bulging with dough-nuts whenever he came to play his trumpet.

By now I had been spotted by various comrades of the Central Council, and from their manner towards me I realised that they were sufficiently high up to know all about my case. Some of them just cut me dead and walked away, while others tried not to catch my eye.

Trouble started almost immediately. Comrade Bapp came up fuming about the cuts I had made. He was in his middle forties, quite bald and one of the bigshots in the *Kultur* department of the Berlin SED. He fought like a lion for each of those items I had ventured to eliminate. It was impossible to make him understand that a show, speeches and all, couldn't last for seven or eight hours. He just screamed at me, so I screamed back, looking at my watch. Damn it all, we had to get on with the rehearsal! Fortunately, my exasperated glance fell on Besecke, who was sitting quietly in the wings. He winked at me, evidently understanding my dilemma. Then he walked up to Bapp and pushed him off-stage.

So it was on with the show. There wasn't a moment to be lost, for there was to be the dress rehearsal that very evening. I was sweating all over and chain-smoking the American cigarettes my mother-in-law sent me regularly from the Argentine. My two guardians were watching me greedily, but I pretended not to notice them. Then Besecke came sidling up to me.

"What about it?" he whispered with a glance at my cigarette. I handed him one.

Georg Silbermann heard what was going on, and grinned. "Is that what you call proletarian vigilance?" he asked.

Then everybody laughed, but Besecke was a typical Berlin cockney who always had the last word. Inhaling deeply, he said: "Of course, it is. That's why we have to smoke the stuff!" That seemed logical enough to me.

Meanwhile, we were having trouble even with the well rehearsed *Sailors of Catarro*, for there were no costumes. When we had last produced it, these had been provided locally. Luckily, someone remembered that some other theatre had recently staged a musical comedy with a number of sailors in it, so Besecke sent the Black Maria to fetch the costumes. But we still had to change the cap ribbons; the ship in Wolf's play was called "St. Georg", not "Merry Seagull"! However, that was a mere detail. What really worried us most were the individual turns. The second half of the programme was opened by Vladimir Majakovski's Lenin poem, with the famous last line which ran:

*Hirn der Klasse,  
Sinn der Klasse,  
Kraft der Klasse,  
Ruhm der Klasse,  
Das ist die Partei.*

\*Brains of the working class/Sense of the working class/Strength of the working class/Glory of the working class/That's what the Party is.



How often had I recited those words which now just seemed to me utterly senseless. I had been brought here in chains, and now I was expected to worship the splendour and might of the Party. Nothing would induce me to recite the lines. So Comrade Hermann Laufkötter had to take over and rehearse the piece as quickly and as best as he could.

Laufkötter had graduated from one of the Party schools in the Soviet Union, and was a clerk in the *Kultur* Department of the FDJ Central Council. He was twenty-five but looked much younger, a haggard blond youth, for ever fiddling with his thick spectacles or biting his fingernails. If only he hadn't stammered so! His first rendering of the "g . . . g . . . glory of the w . . . w . . . working class" wasn't much of a success, and everyone roared with laughter when Besecke, from his watchpost in the wings, called out: "B . . . b . . . bravo!"

That evening we had the public dress rehearsal of the entire programme; public, that was, in that many of the members of the Berlin FDJ were admitted. Everyone of those boys and girls who filled the vast theatre knew me, and when I appeared on the stage they all shouted and cheered. As for Besecke and his colleague, they were getting a little nervous, since it was impossible for them to keep near me all the time. My producer's desk had been set up in the fourteenth row of the stalls, but I gave Besecke a reassuring nod. After all, there were any number of SED and FDJ leaders all around me.

Things went rather better than I had hoped, and when it came to the play *Sailors of Catarro*, I had to appear on the stage myself. How lucky it was that we had played it so often! Yet how different it was this time. Lilian was sitting in the prompter's box, looking at me with those big, shining eyes of hers. The tension between us was almost unbearable. Only we two knew of the real drama being played out here, and I couldn't help wondering what those two thousand boys and girls in the audience would have done if I

had suddenly shouted: "Friends, when the curtain falls, I'll be taken away in chains, and the men who will take me are waiting right here in the wings!"

That night I was taken home again to Baumschulenberg, and once more Georg Silbermann snored on the couch in our sitting room.

The performance the following night was really a gala affair. All the boxes were resplendent with the leaders of the Party and the State. Prime Minister Grotewohl was sitting next to Max Reimann, the West German Communist leader who, with other Communist members of the Bonn Parliament had come over especially for the occasion. There was Hans Jendrewski, President of the Berlin SED, and Walter Ulbricht, Deputy Prime Minister, reputed to be even more powerful than the white-haired man sitting next to him, our beloved President, Wilhelm Pieck. There were men in smart evening clothes next to comrades in working-class suits and without ties; there were parlour-bolshies galore and genuine proletarians. . . . Brains of the working class, sense of the working class, strength of the working class, glory of the working class, that's what the Party is. . . . Yes, comrades!

And then I spotted Inge Rosch, and realised in a flash why I had been arrested. For more than a year her job had been to spy on the men drafted to work in the uranium mines at Aue, and it was only recently that she had been transferred to Berlin with the special assignment of "purging" the FDJ. Next to her, in the front row, sat Robert Menzel. They both looked daggers at me. Then Comrade Rosch, with a sneering grin, whispered something in her companions' ear.

The show began, and I stood backstage and gave the cues for the various turns. Everything went much better than I had dared to hope except for a petty complaint from Ian Koplowitz, who resented the fact that some of his pieces had been cut or left out

altogether. I wouldn't have worried about this if his grumbles hadn't been so loud, for the 'enraged author kicked up such a din that he must have been heard well back in the auditorium.' However, good old Besecke came to the rescue. He simply gripped Koplowitz by the scruff of his neck, shoved him out through the iron pass-door, and slammed it behind him. It was a unique experience to see the Secret Police of the German Democratic Republic chucking out a famous author honoured by the State.

Without any further trouble, we arrived at the time for *The Sailors of Catarro*. Wolf's play dealt with the story of a mutiny in the Adriatic port of Catarro in 1918, when the sailors from the cruiser "St. Georg" refused to obey the orders of the officers of the Imperial Habsburg Navy. A rating, Franz Rasch, had incited his companions to disarm and lock up their officers. But the other naval ships didn't join in the mutiny. Instead, they turned their guns against the "St. Georg", and Rasch, as the leader of the mutiny, was finally executed. I took the part of the sailor Franz Rasch, and on that night I seemed to live it rather than play it. Two thousand people in the State Opera sat spellbound as the play reached its climax - the moment when Rasch, in chains, shouts to his fellow sailors: "Better luck next time, comrades!" The Commander then comes up to him and says: "This is the end."

I had played that scene often before, but now real tears streamed down my face as I lifted my manacled hands and shouted: "No, this is not the end, this is the beginning!"

Somehow, my utter sincerity as I defiantly shouted that last line must have gripped the audience, for, as the curtain fell, they cheered their heads off. As we took the first curtain call my glance singled out Inge Rosch and Robert Menzel in the front row of the stalls. They had lowered their eyes. Many more curtain calls followed, and finally some of my friends jumped on to the stage and lifted me on their shoulders.

I still had my hands tied with rope, and I didn't even try to stop my tears.

Then something very touching happened. Besecke, the SSD man who, for the last forty-eight hours, had been watching me like a trunk full of banknotes, suddenly stood beside me and helped me down from the shoulders of my friends. Then he helped me untie the property rope from my wrists and threw it away. After that, he turned and disappeared in the crowd with his colleague.

Inge Rosch and Robert Menzel then appeared, congratulating all the actors and giving each of them a bunch of flowers: each of them except me. But presently little Willi held out his tulips to me and said: "They are for you, Karlheinz. You've earned them."

Robert Menzel and Inge Rosch glared at the boy, but there was nothing they could do about it at the moment, for the interval had begun and they had to join the other bigshots in the foyer.

Then Lilian was beside me on the stage and accompanying me to my dressing-room. We could easily have got away then, for there was no-one watching us. All we had to do was to walk out and cross the road to the Friedrichstrasse Station, take any west-bound train and be in the British sector within less than five minutes. We didn't speak about it, but we both knew what was in the other's mind.

Lilian just looked at me and waited for me to decide, but my decision was already made. I would not run away. I had nothing to reproach myself with. I would stay and face the issue.

Fifteen minutes later, I did recite the Majakovski poem after all. It would have been unthinkable to let Comrade Laufkötter's stammering spoil the show. Besides, I now felt like shouting those lines, and shout them I most certainly did. . . . *Brains of the working class, sense of the working class, strength of the working class, glory of the working class, that's what the Party is. . . .*

That night, soon after the show had finished, they took me to FDJ Headquarters in Hosemannstrasse. They didn't bother to handcuff me this time, but even so it turned out to be the most horrible night of my life. It wasn't that they tortured me or put me through a third degree. They did nothing of the kind. It was the solitary mental torment that was most unbearable. As the thoughts turned over and over in my mind, I realised that they didn't lead me anywhere. They provided none of the answers that I sought so desperately.

I have often been asked why I didn't save myself a mountain of trouble by doing a bolt that evening while the going was good. As I have said, in the interval and in the general excitement following *The Sailors of Catarro*, I could have slipped away easily enough. I only had to cross the road to the Friedrichstrasse Station, and a three-minute train journey by *S-Bahn* would have taken me to the Lehrter Station in the British sector.

I think that my main reason for not doing so was that I had nothing with which to reproach myself, and that I wanted to see this thing through. But this wasn't just defiance. There was another reason, too. I simply couldn't bring myself to go West, and appear saying: "Hullo, here I am. I went along on the other side so long as the going was good. But it doesn't seem so good now, so I've come over to you. Maybe, after all, you aren't quite so bad as I have made you out to be all these years."

No, I didn't want to go knocking at the door of the West like a beggar. I wanted to go over sure enough, but not like a pedlar changing one line of ideologies for another. When I went, I wanted to be able to say: "Yes, I went along with them on the other side from 1946 on, but I certainly wouldn't have done so if *you* had given me, and the likes of me, a proper chance. But you didn't. *They* did! They gave us all the chances a youngster could hope for. I couldn't have known then that our ideals would soon become

so shop-soiled ; that our fervent hopes of a Germany united in freedom would be bartered away as a pawn in power politics ; and that our vaunted freedom of thought would be turned into mental domination. Once I realised all that, once I recognised it for what it was and was really sure of myself, I began to fight it. I still want to fight for freedom and against terrorism, and if you can use me, I'm your man."

That's what I wanted to be able to say when the time came for me to go over to the West. But that time was not yet. I felt quite sure of this even before Wolfgang Müller told me so. I knew that first I would have to pass my test, just as I knew that such a test would be twofold, for, to begin with, I would have to pose as a repentant sinner. It was by no means certain, however, that I would be given any such chance. It wasn't at all certain that, once in gaol, I would ever be let out again. Nothing was certain beyond the fact that I was spending a night in solitary confinement prior to the hearing I was to get before some bigshots on the following day.

That hearing was more in the nature of a cross-examination, as it finally turned out. But that was not until later. Its prelude, which took place in Menzel's office at headquarters, was almost farcical. He himself was absent, and it was Inge Rosch who sat behind the chief's desk in his stead. The only other person in the room was my ex-driver, Jersch, whom I knew now to be an officer in the State Security Service. He never said a word, but just leaned against the window staring down at the traffic passing up and down Hosemannstrasse.

So it was Inge Rosch with whom I had to deal, a fact that made me stubborn from the start. The very sight of that woman made me feel physically sick. For a while she didn't speak, but seemed entirely engrossed in a file of papers before her, that evidently concerned my case.

Since no-one offered me a chair, I took one and sat down opposite the desk, pulling out one of the

packets of American cigarettes my mother-in-law sent me regularly from the Argentine.

Inge Rosch heaved her enormous bosom from the desk and glared at me fiercely.

"A class-conscious comrade!" she sneered. "Aren't you ashamed of consuming merchandise from the capitalist war-mongers?"

"Our bosses, Comrade Honecker and Comrade Menzel," I told her, "were among my best customers for that sort of merchandise. I could never get as many American cigarettes as they begged me to sell them!"

She flushed with anger and thumbed my file.

"Let's start with your more recent misdemeanours," she said. "In Weimar you got so drunk that you assaulted the local district leader of the Party, smashing a wineglass over his head. Do you realise that this comrade is a very senior and important Party official? And you, you rotten little brat, dared to attack him!"

"If he holds so important a post," I argued, "he shouldn't behave like a pig. He was trying to maul Lilian's legs. Should I have just bowed and said: 'Help yourself, Comrade, my wife is at your disposal?'"

"No doubt," la Rosch said angrily, "it was just a joke. I'm quite sure the comrade thought nothing of it."

"Maybe he didn't, but my wife did."

That retort made her lose her temper. She looked daggers at me and shouted: "You've got such a maddeningly stupid face that I can hardly resist smacking it!"

"You really shouldn't try to restrain your sweetly feminine instincts," I told her, and saw a smile flicker across Jersch's face. Then Inge Rosch lost control altogether.

"You swine!" she screamed. "You dirty, rotten little swine! I'll see you in gaol for life if it's the last thing I do!"

Then with an effort, she pulled herself together, and tried to look official. She produced a slip of paper

from my file and proceeded to read out the charges against me.

- (1) Fraudulent manipulation in dealing with assignments commissioned by the Party, and embezzlement of Party funds.
- (2) Attempting to sabotage shipyards at Ahlbeck and other Baltic ports.
- (3) Contacting Western agents in conjunction with the criminal, Werner Kraft.
- (4) General reactionary attitude, detrimental to the interest of the Party.

When she had finished reading, I got up from my chair. "I can see no point," I said, "in continuing this idiotic conversation. I am going to have a haircut. I'll be back in about an hour."

I banged the door behind me and stalked along the corridor as far as the main gate. There two SSD men faced me; one of them was quite young but hefty, with an ugly scar across his cheek. His first blow made my nose pour with blood and his second struck me in the stomach. I was almost unconscious as they pushed me into the waiting limousine and took me to one of the SSD prisons in the Möllendorfstrasse.

When the door of a small room was banged behind me my nose was still bleeding profusely. The man who had hit me emptied my pockets, while the other fellow made a list of my personal belongings: 26 marks, 18 cigarettes, 1 leather wallet, 1 wrist watch, 1 identity card, 1 pair of shoe laces. The younger of the two gave me a parting kick, and then a sleepy policeman took me along a tiled corridor, past a number of brown painted doors, each with a small card affixed to it. He knocked at one door, opened it without waiting for an answer, then shoved me into the room, and left, locking the door behind him.

It was pitch dark, then suddenly I was almost blinded by three powerful lights flashing in my face, so that I covered up my eyes. Then I heard a deep but not unfriendly voice addressing me, although I couldn't be sure exactly where it came from.



"Have you any contacts with agents of foreign powers?" the voice asked.

"No."

"Have you at any time given reports to RIAS\*? Tell the truth, for we know or learn everything we want to know."

"No."

"On January 10th, 1949, when your drama group performed at Leipzig, what did the tall, bald, middle-aged shop steward tell you after you had offered him an American cigarette?"

I was dumbfounded, and the invisible man obviously sensed the fact.

"Stick to the truth," he said in a coldly menacing tone.

I did. That the shop steward had complained in a mild sort of way about the potato shortage, besides airing one or two trivial grievances. I repeated his words as exactly as I could remember them. I answered all the other questions that were put to me as well as I could. There were scores of them, many of them dealing in minute detail with all sorts of minor and half-forgotten incidents. I was amazed at the accuracy of their information, even concerning the most insignificant points. But a major fact that seemed particularly to interest my questioner was my relationship with Captain Szvershinsky. Almost every one of my many interviews with the latter seemed to have been carefully noted.

The interrogation seemed to last interminably, but, later, I learned that it had gone on for a little less than two hours. It was agony. When it ended, I had a splitting headache, my throat was sore and my eyes watered from those blinding lights.

Then, all of a sudden, those three cruelly fierce and naked lights went out, and a moment later a lamp threw a mercifully subdued light on the desk at the far end of the room. I staggered forward and

\*See footnote, page 97.

the man behind the desk rose, giving me a friendly smile and holding out his hand. He was tall and haggard, with a highly intelligent and not unkindly face. He wore the uniform of a major in the Red Army, for he was, in fact, a senior member of the NKVD.

I took his hand for support rather than out of politeness, for I needed support as he guided me to a comfortable armchair near his desk.

"You have spoken the truth," he said. "I have checked all your answers with the data we have on you. If you have been inconvenienced on the way here, I must apologise. But the SED and the FDJ still have a lot to learn. I will see to it that you are released as soon as possible. Are you hungry?"

"Yes," I said, "very hungry. I've had nothing to eat for the past twenty hours."

He reached for the telephone and gave a sharp order in Russian. A few minutes later the same sleepy policeman appeared, carrying a large tray with some tea and bread, and a juicy steak, covered by two fried eggs.

The Major sat at his desk, silently watching me as I ate. The soft glow of the lamp was a blissful relief to my smarting eyes. Its rays fell on his grey-green cuffs with their elegant links that showed under the sleeves of his uniform tunic, and on his hands, idly resting on the desk. I noticed that they were unusually slender, with long tapering fingers and carefully manicured nails.

That same day—July 24th, 1950, when I had neither returned home nor sent a message by the late afternoon, Lilian went to see Comrade Robert Menzel, who told her that I should have been home long ago. She asked him if I could possibly have been arrested by Western agents.

"That's quite possible," he told her.

"In that case," Lilian suggested, "why not tell the police?" Then she gave him some photographs of me, to be passed on to the Missing Persons Bureau.



June 17th, 1953. Schaeffer, at window, harangues the rioters in East Berlin.



The guying of Schumacher: anti-Western propaganda in East Berlin, 1950.

"Comrade Karl<sup>1</sup>heinz\ Schaeffer, of 27, Baum-  
schulenweg, Berlin, herewith undertakes to keep  
silent about the time of his detention."

That was the statement I was asked to sign. Why not, I thought? For at that moment I would have signed anything simply to get out of the place. I had only spent a few days in gaol, yet I had seen quite enough of the way justice was being administered to wish to be free. There were peasants who had failed to fulfil their quota ; labourers guilty of careless talk ; others who had been caught whilst trying to escape to the West ; women who had been in correspondence with relatives in America and who were therefore under suspicion as spies. There were also pickpockets, burglars and shoplifters, and a few pimps and tarts. I saw them all being taken to their trial and then returning after a lapse of but a few minutes. Their sentences varied from three to eight years, so that I marvelled at how quickly such ster-  
justice could be meted out. Only the pickpockets, the prostitutes and the other hardened criminals got away with sentences of a few weeks or months.

No doubt; I had acted wisely in signing that undertaking, for I was promptly acquitted on every count of my indictment. I was no longer accused of having embezzled Party funds, nor was there any more said about my having maintained contacts with Western agents and sabotaged Baltic ports.

"Your arrest was a stupid mistake," SSD Commissar Alexander told me when I was taken up to his office to collect my release papers. He gave me a friendly smile as he took a paper clip from his desk, straightening it out carefully so as to use it as a toothpick.

"Well," he added, "being a comrade yourself you should know all about the importance of vigilance. Of course, it's being overdone a bit now and again, I'm sorry to say, but just forget it." So said Comrade Alexander, who carried those pornographic pictures around in the pockets of his crumpled, shoddy suit—himself a petty criminal, who had done time and

yet was a useful official of the State Security Service. An obedient man and a stupid one, but a man who didn't in the least look like the devil's helpmate. In fact, he looked much more like a seedy salesman peddling vacuum cleaners.

"Well, my dear Karlheinz, I'm sure we'll see more of one another, and in more pleasant circumstances, I hope," he said, having at last managed to get his toothpick at a particularly stubborn remnant of sausage. He flicked it away as he signed my release note, and as it fell on his desk, that document bears to this day a small grease stain.

*Bewährung*—Bound over to show good behaviour—that was the legal condition of my release. I knew only too well what that meant; simply that the authorities could arrest me again at any time they wanted to and on any trumped-up charge.

As I wanted to know exactly where I stood, I visited each of my chiefs. I went to see Erich Honecker, Robert Menzel and Peter Heilmann, to ask them what they had in mind for me.

"*Bewährung*," said Honecker and Menzel, sneering. But neither of them would spare any time to talk to me properly.

Peter Heilmann did, however, because he was, above anything else, a human being. It didn't occur to him to stand on his dignity as a senior FDJ official and a prominent member of the Party. He looked exactly the same as when I had last seen him, still untidy, badly in need of a haircut, and still with his large, beautiful eyes dreamily and shortsightedly peering out of his pale, intelligent face.

Somehow Peter didn't fit into the smart setting of his new office in the brand-new building that had been put up for the Central Council of the FDJ in the Unter den Linden, almost next door to the last remaining wing of the famous Hotel Adlon. He seemed quite oblivious of the fine tapestries and expensive carpets in his room, and as usual his elegant desk was littered with books.

"Remember what I told you before," he said. "It's the ultimate goal that matters, however hard and filthy we may find the road to it. On our way to the rule of the working class we may yet have to wade and stumble through a good deal worse than slush. But all that matters is the purity of our ideals and our cause, not the meanness and pettiness of the people we may meet on the way. Don't let yourself be embittered and biased, my dear boy. Don't allow a few unpleasant experiences to make you lose either your sense of perspective or your abiding faith in our great cause."

Did he, I wondered, mean what he said? I felt sure that he did.

That was the last time that I ever saw Peter Heilmann. When I rang up his office a few months later, his secretary told me that he had gone on a trip abroad. Later, in West Berlin, I learned that he had been arrested and handed over to the Soviet authorities. His indictment was said to include espionage. A year or two later, in February, 1953, I learned from a very reliable source that Peter had been seen in the notorious Bützow-Dreilinden Prison. He was held as a co-defendant waiting to appear in the great show-trial of Georg Dertinger\* yet to be staged.

To be bound over meant to work one's passage back the hard way. In my case it entailed working as an unskilled labourer at the gas works in Dimitrovstrasse. My wages were ninety-two *pfennigs* an hour, and I was employed by order of the Party.

It wasn't a nice job, neither well paid nor easy. Yet it was quite a useful job so far as the theory and practice of my political education were concerned. We had been taught to be very proud of our

\*Dertinger was a cabinet minister in the German Democratic Republic, and was Foreign Secretary for several years before his sudden arrest (motivated by alleged Western contacts). If he is ever put on trial, and if, indeed, Peter Heilmann should appear in the same dock, it would be hard to imagine a more incongruous pair of alleged conspirators.

*volkseigene Betriebe*, the people's own factories, and proud of them we were. For weren't they the tangible proof that we, the people, owned the means of production? To see a ruthless monopoly capitalist—who was probably a war criminal on the run—duly expropriated, and his property turned over to the people to be administered by the people, for the people, was to see Socialism in the making, and we were well and truly proud of it.

In some cases, no doubt, such pride was thoroughly justified. I had seen some "people's own" factories, in which the workers and all concerned with them, and, indeed, the whole country, had reason to be proud. Yet the gas works, where I was put to work, was also a *volkseigener Betrieb*, but, in this case, there was nothing in which one could feel any pride. As long ago as the days of the Third Reich, those gas works, with their out-of-date machinery, had been condemned. But in the last years of the war, because of the arms drive and with the labour force combed out to fill the dwindling front lines, the authorities had to make do with a great deal of machinery that was on its last legs.

Although in the first year of the German Democratic Republic there wasn't much of an arms drive, the shortage of the materials and labour was still as bad as ever, and we still had to manage with machinery that was only fit for the scrapheap.

Though the machinery in the gas works was nearly worn out, it still had to function, and our manager, a most capable man named Schwarz, kept it going as best as he could. He had been awarded the proud title of *Held der Arbeit*, and as an official "hero of labour" was instructed to double his output during the last quarter of 1950. When he remonstrated with the authorities, pointing out why their demands were plainly impossible, he was told that it was for the Party to organise industrial competition, and for him to bear the responsibility for his own output and to fulfil his quota.

So in the Dimitrovstrasse I saw some "shock-workers" in action, and they certainly didn't take kindly to their job. They were supposed to be "activists on the way to over-fulfilling their quota", but in point of fact they were just slaves. In the month of October, 1950, alone, as many as eighteen men were arrested under suspicion of sabotage. This "sabotage" consisted of falling asleep during some of the political pep-talks shouted at them after working hours. There were quite a few accidents, too, due to the ancient boilers not being fitted with modern safety gadgets. That open mutiny didn't break out in the works must have been due largely to the fact that most of the men, having been employed there for well over ten years, respected old Schwarz and knew that he was doing his damndest for them.

At the end of October, after a three months' spell at the gas works, I was officially reinstated, although my membership of the SED was still in abeyance on account of "behaviour detrimental to the interests of the Party". I had only reached the first stage on my journey back to full recognition; the second stage still lay ahead of me. This second stage entailed *Kultur-politisches Wirken*, which apparently meant that I was to indulge in some *Kultur*-politics, similar to those which I had been doing all along. In time, however, I was to learn that it meant much more than that, for had I really wanted to re-establish myself, I would have been expected to do a good many things that I hadn't bargained for.

Meanwhile, all those comrades who had cut me while I was in disgrace, were again on speaking terms with me. They even shook hands with me and asked me to speak at public debates. I was once again Karlheinz to everybody, and once more commissioned to go on tour with my drama group.

But I had only one real friend, and that was Wolfgang Müller.

"Keep your eyes open," he kept repeating to me. "Keep your eyes open and your ears, too."



Incidentally, I should explain, here and now, that his name is neither Wolfgang nor Müller, nor does he look in the least as I have described him, for I have been at pains to conceal his identity, lest I should compromise him. For although he has been playing a pretty important part in the resistance for years, he has lived on the other side all the time. In fact, he is living there still, and in by no means a minor position.

## X

IN THE summer of 1951 there was a great deal of excitement about the "World Youth Festival" organised in Berlin; and while our press and radio naturally made a tremendous fuss about it, boosting its importance, there was even more activity behind the scenes which was kept very much a secret.

This activity was entirely supervised by the State Security Service, which organised special schools and courses for the instruction and training of carefully picked members of the FDJ, who were to keep an eye on the visitors from Western Germany and the foreign delegations.

One of these schools was near Halle; another—known locally as the Wollweber School for sabotage—in Ladebow; a third, and by far the most important, was at Forst Zinna, about six kilometres from Königs-wusterhausen. This was innocently called *Verwaltungs-Akademie Walter Ulbricht*, but was, in fact, a highly specialised school for training highly specialised agents.

Everyone taking part in the courses there had to assume a cover-name, and the teaching staff consisted almost exclusively of former army officers. The syllabus included a good deal of military training, but the main emphasis was on reconnaissance, coding and other means of sending secret messages.

All those West German comrades who had been reported by their local Communist Party branch-officers as being absolutely reliable were taken to a special place at Gross-Döllen in the Schorfheide, where they were individually pumped for information. The questions they were asked were on these lines:—

What do you know about the occupation troops

in your district, and where are their training grounds?

What do you know or what can you find out about production figures in Western Germany? What is being imported and exported?

Who are the leading industrialists in your district?

Tell us what you know about the personalities of all those holding important positions? . . .

There were countless questions and countless answers of this sort, and every scrap of information was checked and counter-checked, and filed both by the State Security Service and the Soviet Administration at Karlshorst.

I saw something of Gross-Döllén and Forst Zinna while I was still in the East, but I learned even more about them after my escape to the West. For instance, I acquired concrete evidence that by March 1953, well over seven hundred young fellows from Western Germany--all of them "underground" members of the FDJ, which, of course, is illegal in the West--were passed through Gross-Döllén. The majority of them seemed to have given satisfaction to their Eastern bosses. But sixty-three of them we know were arrested and, later, vanished without trace.

Gross-Döllén was a sort of permanent transit camp for sifting the chaff from the wheat, from which the most reliable and intelligent pupils were passed on to the schools at Forst Zinna, Ladebow or Halle for training. Afterwards, they were sent back to Western Germany to their jobs in factories, mines and offices, to serve as agents and liaison men for the numerous under-cover offices maintained by the State Security Service (SSD) at their focal points in Western Germany.

The head of the Gross-Döllén transit camp was Wolfgang Schumacher, a man in his early thirties. He had spent a year or two in Westphalia and the Ruhr as one of the chief under-cover men of the SSD, and was extremely well informed about conditions in the West. His deputy was Erwin Biederscholz, who, although only in his middle twenties, was already

a very senior officer in the SSD. At one time he was a police officer in the Sachsen—Anhalt district, but was sacked because of a homosexual scandal that couldn't be hushed up.

As for the instructors, regularly sent to Western Germany, it was part of their job to organise the visits of West German working-class children to the Eastern Zone, as well as to find capable and reliable youngsters suitable for training in the East. Most of this traffic to and fro was handled "unofficially", by bypassing the check point at Helmstedt. In the woods near there, and also at other border points, there are so-called "Party roads", used with the help of a regular "pilot service". Incidentally, any West German youngster picked for special training in the East had to be a member of at least nine months' standing in the West German Communist Party.

I have seen the minutes of a meeting held in the office of the Central Council of the FDJ in Unter den Linden on September 25th, 1952. That meeting was attended by Erich Honecker and Captain Svotkin, of the Soviet Military Administration, as well as by Werner Erben and Heinz Lippmann, both secretaries of the Central Council. Although it took place after my departure, I managed to get hold of the minutes, and from them we learned that roughly one-third of all the youngsters trained at Ladebow, Forst Zinna and Halle, turned out as suitable for "secret service" work in Western Germany.

What exactly did that mean? And what precisely did they do? Well, it meant either providing certain information from time to time, or engaging in sabotage work.

For infiltrating these young spies into Western Germany there were—and are—two simple methods. Those who had homes and jobs to go back to, were sent across via the "Helmstedt pilot service"; those who hadn't, were camouflaged as refugees. According to the above-mentioned minutes, in the month of August, 1952, alone, eighty-two agents were thus

smuggled into Western Germany. In point of fact, they were flown there at the expense of the Bonn Government.\*

The type of youngsters picked for these highly important jobs had, of course, to be specially qualified. But there was also another category, into which I myself fell—those under *Bewährung*, or “bound over to show good behaviour”.

To give one significant instance of the latter, I quote the case of Dieter Faulner, a young man in his late twenties who worked in the uranium mines. His real assignment at that time was with the SSD, for his job was to keep an eye on his colleagues and to report regularly on the somewhat unhappy atmosphere in the mines. At the end of 1952, Faulner was pronounced medically unfit for further work in the mines, so that State Security Service, well satisfied with his work, took him over as a full-time official. About this time, Faulner met Irene Hempel, a twenty-three-year-old member of the *Volkspolizei*. The two of them, in an attempt to supplement their joint income, opened a brothel. For a while everything went well and the authorities knew nothing of this particular side-line. One night, however, Faulner not only stole a wallet from one of his clients, but was even more indiscreet in raping Hertha, the fourteen-year-old daughter of his landlady, with the result that both

\*It should be remembered that for many years now there has been a steady flow of refugees crossing into West Berlin, their numbers varying from a trickle of a few hundred to a stream of many thousands a week. All these refugees—a vast majority of whom, of course, are *bona fide*—are carefully sifted and checked by the West Berlin authorities and, so far as they can prove that they are genuine political refugees, they are flown out of Berlin and accommodated elsewhere in Western Germany. Since only a very small minority of refugees is awarded that status of official recognition, it is all the more remarkable that eighty-two Eastern agents, in the course of one month, could have managed thus to qualify. But then, as likely as not, they were amply provided with “bogus” evidence of alleged subversive activities.

he and Irene Hempel were sentenced to prison for two years. But since the State Security Service looks after its reliable members, the two were given *Bewährung*, which meant they didn't have to go to prison provided they were prepared to undertake certain other assignments.

They were prepared. . . .

*Bewährung* . . . that was my position, too, and, for the time being, it suited me quite well, as my own *Bewährung* was supposed to consist of "activity in the field of *Kultur-politics*", and, so far, that had only meant touring the country with my drama group.

The play was called *Bomben und Dachziegel* (Bombs and Slates). It was a naïve little piece set in a small town in Western Germany, that told the story of the victimisation of the local workers by the brutal American occupation troops. Its problem was whether the poor workers were to have a roof over their heads or whether they should first build barracks and training grounds for the Americans. It goes without saying that the barracks were given priority.

It was an extremely bad play and our audiences, not unnaturally, were bored by it. But they had to sit through it whether they liked it or not.

Whenever I saw Wolfgang Müller, and told him that I was fed to the teeth and now wanted to cross over to the West, he shook his head. The time was not yet ripe, he said ; I could still do useful work where I was by providing certain facts and figures.

"For years you have worked for them, doing all the damage you could. Now you just want to go West and wash your hands of politics. No, my boy, you've still got something to give us ! That is, unless you want us to think you're a coward."

So that was the situation in a nutshell. Whenever I paced the streets of the Eastern sector, the dreaded word *Bewährung* . . . *Bewährung* . . . *Bewährung*, seemed written on every wall. When I walked abroad in West Berlin that dreaded word changed to Coward . . . Coward . . . Coward.

I had never been so lonely in my life. I had lost the confidence of my former friends, and had no wish to regain it. I had yet to gain the full confidence of those who were to be my new friends. It was a time during which I often thought of what the boxer-parson, Miller, had told me way back in 1946: "A fellow must take the trouble to give himself his own orders and bear his own responsibility."

Then, on August 17th, 1951, SSD Commissar Alexander knocked at my door.

"We've got something for you," he said, with his most friendly smile.

I grew hot under the collar. I knew, so to speak, that I was being given my account. Now they would expect me to pay for my *Bewährung* and to "show my good behaviour" in a more convincing manner than by just taking part in a lousy play on tour.

"We've been thinking," Alexander continued, "that you might as well do a bit of *Kultur-Arbeit* at the Gross-Döllen school just to begin with; after that—we will see."

"When am I supposed to start?" I asked.

He took out a match and began picking his teeth, glancing at me sideways. "In a fortnight" he replied.

I knew exactly what sort of *Kultur-Arbeit* was expected of me. I would have to train young people to denounce one another, to betray their friends and, if need be, to liquidate them. Still, I had a fortnight's grace, and a very useful fortnight it turned out to be, as my former colleague, Horst Boddin, took me on a tour of all the schools where I was to "show my good behaviour". He took me to Forst Zinna, Halle, and Ladebow. I saw and learned a good deal, and all the really important information I gathered I passed on to Wolfgang Müller.

But at the end of that fortnight I didn't start work at Gross-Döllen, for it happened that the Co-operative Peasant Society was most anxious for my drama group to continue touring their rural districts.

So for a few months at any rate, my appointment to Gross-Dölln was deferred by order of the Party.

In the end, they told me that they had found a substitute to take over the drama group. While I wasn't in so many words ordered to give up the play and go to Gross-Dölln, I knew, however, that it wouldn't be wise to wait any longer.

On December 6th, 1951, at 9.30 a.m., I went to see the chief at the *Kultur*-Department in the new building in the Reinhardstrasse, called "The House of German Peasants". I came by appointment, and as soon as I entered the office I announced that I had decided to give up the drama group. I heard a noise in the next room, and presently the door opened and SSD Commissar Alexander entered with a broad grin. He had obviously been awaiting his cue.

"Well, Karlheinz," he chuckled, "I'm glad to see you have so much sense. I'm glad you are not letting down the Party. You can start at Gross-Dölln this very afternoon."

He held out his hand and I shook it without batting an eyelid.

Exactly half an hour later, I had made my final arrangements for Lilian and the children to leave for the West. By ten minutes past ten, I was at the Friedrichstrasse Station buying a twenty Eastern pfennigs ticket to the Charlottenburg Station in the Western sector. It was as simple as that, and the train journey took less than fifteen minutes. . . .

That night, Wolfgang Müller took me along to a flat in Charlottenburg where I faced twenty boys and girls.

"You needn't talk if you don't want to," Bill said.

But I did want to talk. I told them my story. began in 1943 when the first bombs fell on Berlin and I was promoted to *Fähnleinführer* in the Hitler Youth, and it ended that very morning at ten minutes past ten, as the *S-Bahn* train drew out of the Friedrichstrasse Station—westward-bound.



When I had finished, Müller asked the others :  
“What shall we do with him?”

“Let him decide for himself,” one of them answered.

“I want to stay with you and help you,” I told them.

For a year or two, almost every day, we used to go with our West Berlin loudspeaker van to one of the border points separating the West from the East, usually in the Potsdamerplatz. There I would stand at the microphone on top of the van. I didn't make any speeches, but merely repeated the facts that our liaison men all over the Eastern zone provided us with day by day. I would read out the names and addresses of informers and stool pigeons, and announce their latest misdeeds and the names of those they had landed in gaol. People lined up on the opposite side of the border in their hundreds, and sometimes in their thousands, to listen. Since many of the faces in the crowd were familiar to me, I would pick upon them from time to time.

“He,” I would shout, pointing to some man I knew, “is a senior member of the SSD. The man over there is a notorious stool pigeon. That fellow at the back landed his own parents in gaol!”

Not surprisingly, the other side didn't take these attacks lying down. I wasn't the only one of our team to receive daily letters and telephone calls threatening lifelong imprisonment and even death.

On June 26th, 1952, a warrant was found sticking to the door of my parents' house at Schöneberg. But it was only later that actual attempts were made to kidnap me, so that I had to be provided with police protection day and night.

But our work produced a different kind of echo, too. We soon lost count of the number of Eastern youngsters who came to see us when ever they could sneak over into the Western sector. These boys and girls gave us the news we wanted, took whatever advice we had to offer, and, at great risk to themselves, carried our newspapers back to the East with them.

· Our newspaper? On the face of it, it certainly didn't look like ours. The front page was a complete reproduction of the front page of the *Junge Welt*, the central organ of the FDJ. The two inside pages, as well as the back page, were our own and gave the facts as we saw them. It was a paper very similar to the "underground literature" circulated during the old days of Hitler's Reich.

· I have already mentioned that several attempts were made to kidnap me. The most dangerous of these was the first, since it caught me quite unprotected and so almost succeeded. It happened on Saturday, August 9th, 1952, at 11 p.m. on the Wannsee *S-Bahn* Station. Three hefty men, unknown to me except for one—the SSD Commissar Büttner, of the FDJ West Bureau—made a determined attempt to grab me and push me into the train that was just leaving for the Stahnsdorf Station, well within the Eastern sector. Fortunately, I was carrying a revolver, and managed to wriggle free after shooting one of my assailants in the leg. Büttner, in trying to shoot me, smashed two of the station lamps. By the time the police arrived, all three had managed to jump into the moving train.

A few months later, on November 18th, 1952, my old friend Commissar Alexander contacted my mother-in-law, who had by then returned to Germany from the Argentine.

"You should tell Karlheinz how foolish he is," he said, with his most ingratiating smile. "You can tell him from me that, if he returns, the Party will give him back his old job in the drama group and fully reinstate him."

He also offered her 20,000 marks, payable on the day that I recrossed the border.

My mother-in-law rang me up immediately to say that it was high time for me to be flown out of Berlin. But it was not until January, 1953, that I made my first trip to Hamburg to see the editor of the magazine who had agreed to print my story.

On January 16th, at 10.30 a.m., accompanied by a member of the editorial staff, I stood in the huge hall of Tempelhof Airport waiting for our flight to Hamburg. We were idly watching a queue of refugees from the East, such as can be found waiting for almost any westbound plane leaving Berlin, when we saw, patiently waiting with the others, a young man of about twenty, wearing a shabby overcoat, far too thin for the cold weather, and carrying an equally shabby brief-case which seemed to be all the luggage he possessed.

"Good God," I exclaimed to my companion. "Look at that chap. It's Kraft, Werner Kraft, the fellow who was my treasurer at that summer fete."

I called him, and he seemed very pleased to see me. During the flight to Hamburg he told us what had happened to him since he had decamped the morning after that fête in the Friedrichshagen Stadium in the summer of 1950.

"Why did you run away?" I asked him, for the question had been puzzling me all those years. "Your accounts were found in perfectly good order, except for a deficit of two *pfennigs*. It was the stadium owner who sold those 2,000 tickets to feather his own nest. But then you had nothing to do with him, did you?"

"I didn't even know the man," said Werner Kraft; and then he told us how Jersch's cross-examination that night had so unnerved him that as soon as they let him go in the early hours of the morning, he had nipped over into West Berlin.

I could well believe this, for I had been present during the major part of his gruelling ordeal. But I was anxious to know what happened to him later. Hadn't they caught him after all? For that, in fact, was what the Rosch woman had told me.

It took young Kraft the whole of the hour's flight to Hamburg to tell us his story.

On the morning of his escape, having crossed to West Berlin, he went to see his mother at 40, Tilsiterstrasse, in the Friedrichshain district. Unluckily it

was so early that he found his father, Julius Kraft, was still at home. The latter was a minor clerk in the local post-office, but quite a bigshot in the district office of the Communists. He was, in fact, a member of long standing, and fanatically devoted to the Party. "You are a good for nothing traitor," he screamed at his son. "I'll see you in gaol if it's the last thing I do." In spite of his wife's entreaties he handed the boy over to the Eastern police.

Werner was sentenced to two years and eight months, but no sooner was he in gaol than Inge Rosch offered him *Bewährung*. She told him that he could go scot free provided he was prepared to incriminate me and testify against me on the strength of some trumped-up evidence. Werner refused, and so served his sentence or, at any rate, the greater part of it: two years and four months. Then, just before Christmas, 1952, the prison governor granted him four months remission for good conduct and released him. He went West straight away and, having been officially recognised as a political refugee, was scheduled to be flown out. Now, he told us, he was on his way to Bremen where he had some friends, and where he hoped to get a job.

Werner Kraft showed us his papers: his Eastern indictment and sentence as well as his official recognition by the Western authorities. We were no more in doubt about his bona fides than had been the West Berlin authorities when granting him his recognition. In Hamburg, Werner had to catch his connection to Bremen, but before we parted I thanked him sincerely for his decency in having turned down Inge Rosch's offer. My companion went even further by saying that Kraft's information had interested him, and that he would have a word with the editor, adding that perhaps the paper would do something for him.

In fact, shortly afterwards, the editor agreed, and promptly sent a representative to Bremen to look after young Kraft. As the boy was completely destitute, he was given everything from toothbrush to pullover;

everything, in fact, that a young man could need when starting a new life.

A few months later, on April 8th, 1953, Werner Kraft was seen in a street in the Eastern sector of Berlin, in company with his mother. This fact might have seemed suspicious, but Kraft gave a perfectly plausible explanation when, a few days later, on April 13th, he called at the editorial office in Hamburg, asking for a little money in return for some interesting information he had picked up. He admitted at once having been in East Berlin, saying that he had gone there, in fact, to see his mother, who was ill, and with whom he had remained on good terms even after his escape to the West. He told us, too, that he wanted to have it out with his father, one way or the other, and had met the old man at the home of a relation in West Berlin. No reconciliation, however, had been possible, and he had now finally broken with his father. Having failed to find a job in Bremen during the three months he was there, he said he had now decided to settle permanently in Hamburg, where he had taken a job as a shop assistant, having also been lucky enough to find a small furnished room. All he now needed apparently was a little cash to tide him over until he was paid his first week's wages.

The very day after he had told us all this, April 14th, our excellent information service in Eastern Germany provided clear evidence that Werner Kraft's gaol sentence had had nothing whatever to do with the 'Schaeffer affair'. The documents he had shown us at Tempelhof Airport were bogus, and had been provided by the Eastern authorities simply to help Kraft obtain official Western recognition as a political refugee. In point of fact, he had been in gaol for serious homosexual offences committed against young boys, for which he had been given a five-year sentence. Having served just over two years, he had been granted *Bewährung* on the understanding that he was to act as an informer for the SSD.

One of his special assignments was to keep an eye on me, and thus our meeting on Tempelhof Airport was far from being a coincidence. On the contrary, it was very well timed with his successful effort to be flown out at the expense of the West Berlin authorities. As for his father, Kraft was still on the best of terms with him; while so far as his activities on behalf of the SSD were concerned, these, too, had been quite successful. Up to date he had been solely, or partly, instrumental in getting at least three persons sent to gaols in the East.

It was on April 14th, at 3.45 p.m., that this information became known in Hamburg. Half an hour later the police had a warrant out for Werner Kraft's arrest, only to find that he had left the city that morning and, for the time being at any rate had sought sanctuary within the jurisdiction of his SSD bosses.

It was not until 1954, almost exactly a year later, that Werner Kraft was finally caught. He was, in fact, arrested by the West Berlin police as one of those involved in a rather clumsy second attempt to kidnap me. It was, indeed, a thoroughly badly organised affair. Kraft's three accomplices were all juvenile delinquents serving gaol sentences for more or less minor offences. They had been given *Bewährung* on condition that they helped him. The eldest of them was Wolfgang Schlosser, who had been doing time in the Rummelsberg prison. He was released by one of the more notorious "*Polit-Kultur*" officers of the State Security Service, a fellow called Schweiger.

The four men hired a car in West Berlin and then made themselves very conspicuous by parking it three nights running in front of my house. But that didn't help them much, since at that time I never left the house except under police guard. As for Kraft himself, he did not dare to show himself in our street, for he must have known that I would have had him arrested on the spot.

When, after a week or so, the kidnappers produced

no results, the SSD, losing patience, tightened their purse-strings. So the boys became desperate, and to raise money attempted a very foolish smash-and-grab raid at a jeweller's in the Sonnenallee, in Neukölln, a Western suburb. It was even more futile since Schlosser had, in the meantime, taken fright and spilled the beans to the Western police, with the result that, when Kraft and his pals arrived at the jeweller's, the police were waiting for them next door. After his arrest, Kraft at first tried to deny being involved in the attempt to kidnap me, but after a day or two he made a full confession. He is still in the West Berlin gaol at Moabit. As this book goes to press news has arrived that Werner Kraft has been brought to trial at the Moabit Court in West Berlin. He has received a two-and-a-half years' sentence, but the year he has already spent in custody will be deducted from it.

# XI

THE PUTSCH of June 17th, 1953 came as a surprise to the world at large ; and it even surprised those of us who were already aware of the unrest and unhappiness behind the Iron Curtain, and of how misery, distrust and fear had been spreading all through that spring and early summer of 1953. Yet, when it actually started, the news hit the West Berliners like a bomb-shell, and thousands of us went to the Potsdamerplatz and other border vantage points to see for ourselves what was on foot.

As I happened to be standing in the front line of the crowd on the Potsdamerplatz, I was recognised by a group of kids on the other side. They had worked as bricklayers on the Stalin Allee, and since I had been their FDJ district leader at the time they started to work in that very same Friedrichshain district, they knew me well enough. As a matter of fact, they had been working on the Stalin Allee ever since and, as it was among these very "shock-workers" that the revolt had broken out early that morning, they had been in the thick of it.

One of them, in fact, had crossed the border to fetch me, but, of course, I had already left home to see for myself as soon as I heard the news. Naturally, when I saw my old friends among the ringleaders, nothing could stop me from rushing across the street and joining them.\*

\*It should be added here that it required a great deal of courage for Schaeffer to cross that street, for had he been caught a life sentence would have been the very least he could have expected. It is more likely, however, that, in the special circumstances prevailing during those excited days, it would have meant the executioner's axe.



"Don't you let a *Vopo* catch you," was the last thing one of my pals on the Western side of the square had shouted to me as I dashed across. But there was no *Volkspolizei* in sight, and we had to go out of our way to look for them. We marched straight to the nearby *Columbus Haus* where we knew a police station to be situated, and felt wildly elated as we forced our way into it. None of our group, incidentally, carried any firearms, but some of them had crowbars, hammers and other tools of their trade, and it was easy enough to force the door.

We found about a dozen *Vopo* men inside, but none of them offered any resistance. In fact, as soon as we started to talk to them they sympathised with us.

"Why don't you come on over to the West, boys?" I asked them, and most of them agreed readily. One or two were afraid of being put in gaol, but I told them not to worry and promised to see them across.

Finally, they all marched out with us quite happily, and as we approached the border we were greeted by cheers from the huge crowd on the Western side. For to see men in *Vopo* uniform linking arms with us, laughing with us and loudly abusing Grotewohl and the other Eastern leaders, delighted the crowd. They cheered themselves hoarse and made room for us to squeeze through to the nearest Western police station, where I happened to know the officer in charge.

"Take care of them," I told him. "We didn't have to capture them. They came over of their own free will."

My police officer friend was as good as his word, and he saw to it that the men were rid of their hated uniforms, given civilian clothes and cared for by one of the refugee organisations.

Having thus discharged our "prisoners", the boys from the Stalin Allee and I went back to the border point of the square, and once again the people roared their delight and cheered us as we forced our way through the crowd.

"Go to it, boys!" they shouted. "Get some more of their coppers across!"

That was exactly what we meant to do, but this time we hadn't a chance. By then Russian tanks were rolling up the Leipzigerstrasse and the other approaches to the Potsdamerplatz, the Brandenburger Tor and the rest of the border points, and before we got anywhere near the next *Vopo* station, half a mile away, we were being spattered by machine-gun fire so that we quickly broke up into smaller groups.

Our general idea was that all of us should meet up again in or near the Stalin Allee. I was in one of those groups along with two of the boys, but we got nowhere near the Stalin Allee. There were tanks and police round every street corner, and it was quite clear that by now the revolt had been crushed. In fact, we soon heard news of mass arrests among other groups of Stalin Allee workers who had stayed behind in that district.

The problem for me now was how to get out of this alive and back across the Western border. It wasn't easy, but I just managed it, though twice I was thoroughly frightened—once, when I made the final dash across the square and was being shot at, and once before when, somewhere near Dirksenstrasse, I was recognised by a SSD man, a particularly savage character, with whom I had had more than one row during a course we attended together. The moment he saw me, he raised a terrific hue and cry, but I managed to dodge round a corner without being shot and finally escaped.

When I got back to the West my first worry was to find out about Wolfgang Müller. I knew that he and another friend of ours had come across and, as I feared, they were still in the West. Later that evening I met them.

"We've got to be back in the office by the morning," said Müller, "or there'll be hell to pay."

How well I knew it! After all, Müller's vital importance to our movement rested largely in the fact

that he was not under any suspicion in his job on the other side ; and much the same applied to the other fellow who was stranded with him in the West that evening. With all the frontier posts severely guarded, it was impossible for them to get back by the normal route.

However, it was imperative for them to return, so there was nothing for it but that I should help them, and once more risk going across that night. It so happened that I was the only one available in our circle who knew a certain secret route that might still be relatively safe. We had used it more than once in the weeks immediately preceding the revolt, though at normal times it was fairly easy to cross by one of the usual routes, or indeed by the underground or *S-Bahn* trains. But that night things were very far from normal.

So I took Müller and his colleague by our secret route which relied mainly on some almost impenetrable ruins on the corner of Bernauerstrasse and Brunnenstrasse in Wedding, a working-class district on the junction of the Russian and French sectors. We crossed safely, since my guess that this fairly unapproachable border spot would be uncontrolled proved correct. But our luck did not hold, for we had hardly got across when we had to find a hiding place in the ruins, because here, too, Russian tanks and German *Volkspolizei* were about to cordon off the district. They were doing this because a large crowd had gathered on the "French" side of the street to take a look across the border and shout their disapproval of the Eastern regime.

So far as Müller and his pal were concerned, their situation was now not so bad, since they were now on the Eastern side and were able to get away through some back streets without being noticed. I told them to leave, but didn't go along with them, because I could not now risk being recognised in the East ; and there were many people about that night who knew me only too well. Thus, I had no choice but to

go on hiding in those ruins, which were only a few yards away from the border. Finally, having waited for nearly two hours, I decided to risk making a dash across the street.

But, unluckily, as I jumped some eight or nine feet down into the pitch dark street, I fell plumb at the feet of a *Vopo*. He immediately started to beat me up, but as there was still quite a crowd watching from the French side, two or three chaps rushed across to my aid.

Having scrambled to my feet and kicked myself free of the *Vopo*, I was just going to make a dash for it with my rescuers, when two Russian soldiers appeared and started shooting. One of the men with me was shot in the knee, while I got away more lightly with a shot grazing my left arm. But we managed to make it, and the French gendarmes took us to a nearby Red Cross post, set up when the shooting had started that morning. After they had given us first aid, they sent us home.

So much for the June *putsch* which so pathetically misfired, but at least proved to the world that the people behind the Curtain were far from being as happy as they were cracked up to be by their propagandists.

In conclusion, and to bring my story up to date, I would add that the schools at Gross-Dölln and Forst Zinna were dissolved in the autumn of 1954, but similar institutions have been founded, and the *Wollweber Schule* at Ladebow, near Greifswald, is still operating as efficiently as it ever did, and is still one of the brain-cells of the SSD.

Wolfgang Schumacher, who worked there during my time, has now risen in the world to be a major in the SSD, but Biederstolz has come a cropper; in 1954 he was sentenced to fifteen years hard labour for alleged sabotage.

Ursel Schradler has reached the goal on which she set her heart while she was such an ardent pupil during one of our courses; she is now quite a bigshot in the

*Volkspolizei*. As for Hans Fepske, her tutor and the main inspiration of her *Ich-Buch*, he, too, has gone up in the Party world. He is now a department chief in the Ministry of State Security, his department being *Kader-Politik*, which involves highly specialised indoctrination and gives the final polish to those who are to be entrusted with special duties abroad.

Kidnapping, I know for certain, is one of the jobs which might be called part of *Kader-Politik*. There I speak with some authority, since after those attempts which I have already described, three others have been made on me.

The last was on January 22nd, 1955. I was coming home from the cinema with my wife, and, at 11 p.m., at the corner of the Frankenstrasse and the Goltzstrasse, I recognised a fellow who was hanging around as a notorious SSD thug. Evidently he was the "tip-off man", and as he fortunately had his back to us, I just had time to glance round the corner of the Frankenstrasse where, as I expected, I saw a large, powerful car parked in front of my house.

I managed to reach the nearby police station unobserved, but unluckily the four men—there were three waiting in the car—just succeeded in giving the police the slip.

Apart from these attempts, I have been quite safe. As for the future, who knows? Somehow I feel things cannot go on as they are, not for ever, at any rate. No-one really wants any more bloodshed. I certainly don't. I feel that I've had enough of it to last me a lifetime.

## EDITOR'S CONCLUSION

**I** HAVEN'T much to add to this document except a few reflections which may perhaps go to show that its message is not quite so depressing as might appear at first sight.

True enough, it is a sordid story, particularly for those who share my own distaste for melodrama and who may well ask if the young man who happens to be its central character has not rather a penchant for overdramatising himself. I suppose he has. But then, is not this very lack of perspective yet another part of the price that his hapless generation has to pay for having been (and still being) pawns in a cold war?

For there can be no doubt about it that this "cold" warfare is no less demoralising than any other form of war; more so perhaps, for there isn't a spark of chivalry in this battle of ideologies, nor is there a hope of achieving some understanding of, and respect for, the other side. There is only blind hatred and stubbornness, with no quarter given or asked for.

In the Western world we often tend to think of Germany and the Germans in terms of what they were, and are apt to forget that a great change has come over that nation. If it hadn't, it would indeed be a miracle. But it has not yet grown very obviously noticeable, so that our misconceptions are to some extent understandable, for the German leaders so far have been running true to the old form, and there has been little that was unpredictable in their attitude and actions.

But then almost all of them are elderly or old men, and very soon it will no more be up to them to decide the issues. It will be for the generation with which we are here concerned, together with those who are some five to ten years their seniors: those young enough to have avoided the old ruts and cliques and clichés, but still

old enough to have experienced actively every 'grim day and ghastly night' of Hitler's war; old enough, too, to have had their share of the terrible aftermath, but still young enough to have had to acquire most of their schooling during just that period; young enough, in short, to have had to learn the facts of political life during those hard years, and in very much the hard way.

There are two German states, and in these pages we are given abundant evidence of the Eastern authorities' fanatical zeal for indoctrinating young people and making them eager agents and willing tools of their political creed. This zeal, no doubt, has been paying them dividends. Yet, it is the very fanaticism of the system that seems to have become increasingly repulsive to a growing number of the more intelligent youngsters over there, and most of all to the "war generation" proper. Among the latter, in the East as well as in the West, a healthy distaste for any form of extremism and regimentation is becoming increasingly apparent.

That indeed is a sign of health, and it bodes well for a not too distant future, when the young men and women of that generation will come into their own and make their weight fully felt. They should prove to be mercifully unencumbered by doctrines and caucuses, for what wisdom they have will be born of doubt and suffering. And what they can contribute to the counsels of the nations should be that very quality of reason and restraint so sadly lacking in the make-up of some of their elders.











